











# KING OF THE CASTLE



# *King of the Castle.*

A NOVEL

BY

G. MANVILLE FENN,

AUTHOR OF

'THIS MAN'S WIFE;' 'THE MASTER OF THE CEREMONIES;'

'DOUBLE CUNNING,' ETC., ETC.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

VOL. II.

LONDON:

WARD & DOWNEY,

12 YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

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1892.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE LOOMING OF A STORM.

“WELL, my dear,” said Gartram, as Claude entered the room; “want to see me?”

“Yes, papa; you sent for me.”

“I sent for you? Oh, to be sure; I forgot.”

He was seated in an easy-chair, leaning back as if half-asleep, and he raised himself slowly as Claude came to his side.

She looked at him keenly, and felt a curious sensation of sinking and dread, as it struck her that her father was suffering from the effects of the sedative in which he indulged.

“Well,” he said smiling, “what are you looking at?”

“At you, dear; are you well?”

“Never better, my dear. Sit down ; I want to talk to you.”

Claude shrank inwardly as she took a chair, but he was not satisfied.

“Come a little nearer, my dear.”

She obeyed, and the shrinking sensation increased as she felt that there was only one subject upon which her father was likely to speak.

“That’s better,” he said, taking her hand. “Mr Glyddyr has been here this morning ?”

“No, father.”

“Ha !” he exclaimed rather sharply. “Now, I don’t quite like the tone in which you said that ‘No, father,’ my dear ; and I think it is quite time that you and I came to an understanding. Claude, my dear, you have been thinking a good deal lately about what young people of your age do think of a great deal—I mean marriage.”

“Oh, no, papa,” said Claude emphatically.

“Don’t contradict, my dear. I am not blind, and it is perfectly natural that you should think of such a thing now.”

Claude was silent.

“You and Christopher Lisle were a good deal thrown together.”

Claude’s check began to deepen in colour.

“You were boy and girl together, and if not brother and sister in your intimacy, at least like cousins.”

“Yes, papa.”

“Well, presuming upon that, Master Christopher must suddenly forget he was a boy, and came to me with the most impudent proposals.”

“Papa!”

“There, I am not going to say any more about him, only I have taken that as a preface to what will follow.”

Claude drew a deep, long sigh.

“Now, of course, that was all boyish folly, and I bitterly regret that we should have had such a scene here; but the natural course of events was, that I should think very seriously of your future settlement in life.”

“I am settled in life, father,” said Claude firmly. “I do not intend to leave you.”

“Thank you, my darling. Very good and

filial of you," said Gartram, taking and holding her hand. "One moment, the room is very warm ; I'll open the window."

"Let me open it, dear," said Claude ; and she went and threw open the French window, returning directly to sit down, her countenance growing a little hard.

"Now, then, child, we may as well understand each other at once."

"Yes, papa, if you wish it."

"Well, my darling, I began life as a very poor man. I had a good name, but I was a pauper."

"Not so bad as that, papa?"

"Worse. The worst kind of pauper—a gentleman without an income, and with no means of making one. But there, you know what I have done ; and I can say now that, thanks to my determined industry, I have honourably made a great fortune. Well, you don't look pleased."

"No, dear ; I often think you would have been happier without the money."

"Silly child ! You have had your every wish gratified, and do not know the value of

a fortune. Some day you will. Well, my dear, I am growing old."

"No, not yet."

"Yes, yes, my dear, I am; and my health is getting completely wrecked."

"Then let's go away and travel."

"No; I have another project on hand, Claude. It has long been my wish to see you married."

"Papa!"

"To some good man who loves you."

"Oh!"

"A man of wealth and some position in the world, and that man I believe I have found in Parry Glyddyr."

"Papa, I—"

"Hush, my dear, let me speak; you shall have your turn. Glyddyr is the representative of a good old Welsh family. He had three hundred thousand pounds at his father's death, and, best of all, he loves my darling child very dearly. Now, what do you say to that?"

"I do not love Mr Glyddyr," replied Claude coldly.

"Tut, tut, tut. Nonsense, my dear, not yet. It is the man who loves first; that makes an impression upon the woman, who, as soon as she feels the influence of the man's affection, begins to love him in return. A man's love begins like a flash; a woman's is a slow growth. That is nature, my dear, and you cannot improve upon her."

"Papa, I—"

"Now, don't be hasty, my child. Glyddyr is a very good fellow—a thorough gentleman. I like him, he loves you, and if you will only put aside all that boy and girl nonsense of the past, you will soon like him too—more than you can conceive. But, as he reasonably enough says, you don't give him a chance."

"Did Mr Glyddyr say that?" said Claude, with her lip curling.

"Yes; and really, Claude, you are sometimes almost rude to him with your coldness. Come, my dear, I want you to see that it is the dearest wish of my life to have you happy."

"Yes, papa dear, I know it is, but—"

"Now, let's have no buts. I favour Glyddyr's suit because he is all one could

desire, and he came to me like a frank gentleman and told me how he saw you first and took a fancy to you, but thought he should forget it all ; then felt his love grow stronger, and, as he has shown us—he has waited months and months to prove himself—felt that you were the woman who would make him happy and—”

“ I could not make Mr Glyddyr happy, papa.”

“ Nonsense, dear ! What do you know of such things ? I say you can, and that he can make you very happy and me, too, in seeing you married well.”

“ Papa, dear, I don’t think you quite understand a woman’s heart,” said Claude.

“ I understand a girl’s, my dear—yours in particular—so now I want you to set aside some of this stiff formality, and to meet Glyddyr in a more friendly way. Of course I don’t want you to throw yourself at his head. You are an extremely wealthy heiress. I’ve made my money for you, my pet, and you can afford to be proud, and to hold him off. Make him know your value, and woo and win you, but,

hang it all, my child, don't turn yourself into an icicle, and freeze the poor fellow's passion solid."

"Papa, dear, you said I should speak soon."

"And so you shall, my darling ; but I have not quite done. I want you to think all this over, and to look at it as a duty first, then as a matter of affection. Oh, it's all right, my pet. I'm glad to see so much maiden modesty and dutiful behaviour. I didn't want him to think he had only to hold out his hand for you to jump at it ; certainly not. You are a prize worth winning, and you are quite right to teach him your value, you clever little jade. There, I think I've nearly done. Only begin to melt a little now, and give the poor fellow a bit of encouragement. And you must not be piqued at his saying you were so distant. I drew that out of him. He did not come to complain, though I must say he had good cause. There, now, I have quite done, and I am sure my darling sees the common sense of all this. I don't want to lose my Claudie, and I shouldn't at all dislike a trip on the Continent with her. There's no hurry—a

year—two, if you like. I'll let my pet make her own terms, only let's give the poor fellow a chance. Then I may tell Glyddyr?"

"No, father dear," said Claude firmly; "you must not tell Mr Glyddyr anything."

"What?"

"He is a man I do not like."

Gartram's countenance changed a little, but he kept down his anger.

"Not yet, my dear, not yet, of course. It is not natural that you should, but you will in time, and the more for feeling a bit diffident now. Come, we understand one another, and I won't say a word to the poor boy. You will let him feel that the winter is passing, the thaw beginning. Give him a little spring first, and the summer in full swing by-and-by."

Claude shook her head.

"It is impossible, papa, dear. I could never like Mr Glyddyr."

"Now, my dear child, don't make me angry by adopting that obstinate tone. You are too young yet to understand your own mind."

"I know I could never love Mr Glyddyr sufficiently to be his wife."

“Now, look here—”

“Don’t be angry with me, dear. You wish me to be always frank and plain with you?”

“Of course, but—”

“I must know about a matter like this. I do not and cannot love this man.”

“Absurd, Claude.”

“I don’t want to marry. Let me stay here with you. I can be very happy amongst the people I know, and who know me, and require my help.”

“Yes; a gang of impostors sucking my money through you.”

“No, no. What I give is to make you loved and venerated by the poor people who are sometimes in distress.”

“Now I don’t want a lecture on the relief of the poor, my dear,” said Gartram quickly.

“I want you to quietly accept my wishes. I am your father, and I know what is for your good.”

Claude was silent, for she knew by familiar signs that the tempest was about to burst.

“Do you think I wish you to marry some penniless scoundrel, who wants to get my

money to make ducks and drakes with it? There : I was getting cross, but I am not going to be. Once more, there is no hurry. Thaw by degrees. It will prove Glyddyr to you, and let you see that the poor fellow is thoroughly sincere. Come, my pet, we understand each other now? Hang it all, Claude, don't look at me like that!"

"My dearest father," she cried, after a moment's hesitation, and she threw herself upon his breast and nestled to him, "are you not making a mistake?"

"No; I am too much of a business man, my dear. I am not making a mistake, unless it is in being too easy with you, and pleading when I might command. There, I'm glad you agree with me."

"No, no, papa; I cannot," she said tearfully.

"Now, Claude, my darling, don't make me angry. You know what my health is, and how, if I am crossed, it irritates me. You are my obedient child, and you agree with what I say?"

"No, papa," she said imploringly; "I cannot."

"Then you are thinking still of that beggarly, fortune-hunting scoundrel Lisle?"

"Father, dear, don't speak like that of Christopher Lisle. He is a true gentleman."

"He is a true money-seeking vagabond, and I have forbidden him my house for the best of reasons. I would sooner see you dead than the wife of a man like that."

Claude shrank away from him, and her convulsed face hardened, with the faint resemblance to her father beginning to appear.

"You are unjust to him."

"It is false, madam," he cried excitedly, with his brow beginning to grow knotty. "I know the scoundrel by heart, and as you are refusing to meet me on the terms full of gentleness and love which I propose, you must be prepared for firmness. Now, please understand. It is the dearest wish of my heart that you should marry Parry Glyddyr. I like him; he is the man I wish to have for my son-in-law; and he loves you. Those are strong enough points for me, and I'll have no opposition."

"Father!"

“Silence! I will not hurry matters, but you may look upon this as a thing which is definitely settled. Glyddyr is coming here this morning, as I told you before. I shall tell him that we have come to an understanding, and that he may consider himself as accepted, with a long probation to go through. There, you see, I am quite calm, for I make that concession to you—plenty of time.”

“Father, dear, listen to me,” cried Claude passionately.

“No! I’ll listen to no more. You can go now and think. You will come to your senses by-and-by, I have no doubt, even if it takes time.”

Claude caught his hand in hers, but he withdrew his own with an angry gesture, and she shrank back for a moment. There was that, though, in his face which made her hesitate about saying more, and reaching up, and kissing him hurriedly, she left the room, thinking that he would calm down.

He stood watching her as she left, and then, grinding his teeth with rage, his face flushing and his temples beating hard, he strode across

to the door, locked it securely, and drew a curtain across.

“The scoundrel! He has poisoned her mind. But I’d sooner kill him—I’d sooner—Oh, it’s maddening,” he cried, as he went to a drawer, fumbled with the key on a bunch he drew from his pocket, and had some difficulty in opening it, for his hand trembled with suppressed passion.

Then he drew open the receptacle, and from the back took out a ring with three curiously formed keys. These clinked together with the involuntary movements of his hands as he crossed to a bookcase, took out a couple of books, opened a little door behind them, and thrust another key in at the side. There was a sharp click, and he started back, withdrawing the key, and stood and gave his head a shake as if to clear it.

“How I do hate to be put out like this,” he muttered, as he laid his hand in a particular way upon the end of the bookcase, which slowly revolved on a pivot, and laid bare a large iron door.

“I don’t feel at all myself,” he continued,

as he used the third and largest key, which opened the great door of his safe, and exposed a massive-looking closet built in the wall with blocks of granite, at the back of which were half-a-dozen iron shelves.

"Hah!" he exclaimed, as he stood in the opening, reaching forward and taking down a small square box, which was heavy. "He'd like to have the pleasure of spending you, no doubt, but I can checkmate him. Now," he continued, "let's finish counting."

He carried the box to the table, set it down, and then took out, one by one, five canvas bags, one of which he untied, and poured out a little heap of sovereigns. This done, he went back to the safe and took a small, thick ledger from another shelf, walked back to the table, opened the book, and made an entry of the date therein, then, leaving the pen in the opening, seated himself once again to count the coins into little piles of twenty-five.

"No," he murmured; "I haven't worked all these years to have my money swallowed up by a fortune-hunter. No, Master Chris Lisle."

He started from his seat, overturning a pile

of sovereigns, for at that moment, sweet and clear, came the song of a robin seated upon a tamarisk just outside the window.

“Good heavens ! I must be mad,” he cried. “Who opened that window ? Yes ; Claude, I remember,” he muttered ; and he was in the act of crossing to close it when he stopped short, threw out his hands, and fell with a heavy thud upon the thick Turkey carpet, to lie there with his face distorted, struggling violently, and striking his hands against a chair.

## CHAPTER II.

### CHRIS VISITS THE MUSEUM.

RACING did not agree with Chris Lisle, for the morning after his return from town he rose with a bad headache ; and as he lived one of the most regular lives, he knew that it could not be caused by errors of diet. It would have been easy enough to have attributed it to the true cause—constant worry—but he was not going to own to that, as it seemed weak, so he set it down to his hair being too long.

“No wonder my head’s hot,” he said to himself ; and, acting upon impulse, he hurried out of the room, and walked straight along the cliff road toward where, a few minutes before, Michael Wimble had had his head out of his door, looking for customers, after the fashion in which a magpie looks about for something to secrete.

He was a dry, yellow-looking man, thin,

quick and sharp in action as the above-named bird, one to which his long nose and quick black eyes gave him no little resemblance; and this he enhanced by his habit of thrusting his head out of his door, laying his ear on his shoulder, and looking sidewise in one direction, then changing the motion by laying his other ear upon the fellow shoulder, and looking out in the opposite direction.

The Danmouth people, as a rule, always looked straight out to sea in a contemplative fashion, in search of something which might benefit them—fish, a ship in distress, flotsam and jetsam; but Michael Wimble looked for his benefits from the shore, and seldom gazed out to sea.

His place of business was called generally “the shop,” in spite of an oval board bearing upon it, in faded yellow letters upon a drab green ground, the word “*Museum*,” as an attraction to any strangers who might visit the place, and be enticed by curiosity to see what the museum might contain, as well as by a printed notice pasted on each door-post, “Free admission.” Once within, they might

become customers for shaving, haircutting, a peculiar yellow preparation which Michael Wimble called "pomehard," or some of the sundries he kept in stock, which included walking-sticks, prawn nets, fishing lines, and white fish hooks, made of soft tinned iron, so that, if they caught in the rough rocky bottom, or some stem of extra tough seaweed, a good tug would pull them through it—bending without breaking—a great advantage and saving, so long as they did not behave in this way with a large fish.

Michael Wimble was very proud of his museum, and took pleasure in telling the sea-side visitors that he had collected all his curiosities himself, and very much resented upon one occasion its being called a "Marine store" by a gentleman from town.

The museum began as a labour of love, for Michael had cast his eyes upon the fair elderly motherly widow, Chris's landlady, and, since the commencement of his collection, he had laboured on, in the belief that, as it increased in importance, so would the woman soften toward him; and that some day all his four-

roomed dwelling would become museum and business place, while he would go and reside at the widow's house—widow no longer, but Mrs Wimble—his own.

The beginning of the museum was a star-fish, with four small rays and one of enormous size, that he picked up during his regular morning walk along the sea-shore, wet or dry, summer or winter, at six o'clock, as near to the edge of the water as he could get, returning close under the cliffs in time to have his place of business opened by eight.

The star-fish was duly dried and admired, and talked about by his regular customers; and this seemed so satisfactory that it was soon supplemented by a cuttlefish bone.

A piece of wood well bored by teredoes followed. Then a good-sized chump of ship timber, with a cluster of barnacles attached, was carried in one morning to commence the fine, fusty, saline, sea-weedy odour which smothered completely the best hair oil, the pomade and the scented soap.

The museum grew rapidly: hanks of seaweed, more cuttlefish bones, native sponges,

shells of all sorts and sizes, some perfect, and some ground thin and white by long chafing in the shingle. Stones of all kinds, from spar to serpentine, and grey and ruddy granite; sharks' teeth, pieces of mineral of metallic lustre, fragments of spar, and fossils, including great ammonites, chipped out of a bed of rock which presented its water-washed face to the advancing tide.

There was always something to bring home to suspend from the wall, arrange on shelf, or give a place of honour in one or other of the glass cases, which by degrees were purchased; and as Wimble's museum increased, so it became of local celebrity.

Michael Wimble had been peering out when a customer appeared, and after due soaping and softening with hot water, the barber was operating with a thin razor, which scraped off the harsh bristles off the fisherman with a peculiar metallic ring.

The final triumphant upper scrape was being given when Chris entered the museum, and the barber's eyes twinkled, for there were signs about Chris which suggested a new customer,

one who was in the habit of getting his professional aid in the county town.

"At liberty in a moment, sir," said the barber obsequiously; and he rapidly wrung out a sponge, removed the unscraped-off soap from the fisherman's face, and threw a towel at him with a look which seemed to say, "Take that and be off."

"Nyste mornin' this, Mis' Lisle, sir," said the fisherman, wiping his face slowly. "Long time since you've had a run after the bahss."

"Yes, 'tis," said Chris shortly.

"Ay, 'tis as you say, sir, that it is; but when you feel in the right mind you've only got to say so, and I'm your man, punt and all."

"Cut or shave, sir?" said the little barber, with a look at his regular customer which seemed to say, "Go." And he went.

"Cut," said Chris laconically; and he took his seat in the operating chair.

The barber looked disappointed as he drew his professional print cloth round his customer, giving it a shake, and then securing it about his neck like a Thug with a new victim.

“Much or little off, sir?” continued Wimble, with a preliminary snip in the air.

“Much ; but don’t make it a confounded crop,” said Chris sourly ; for he had a natural dislike to the barber, and was vexed with himself for not having had his hair cut in London.

“Much, but not too much,” said Wimble thoughtfully ; and then, with the customary chatter of his profession, he started a topic.

“Been up to the quarry, sir, lately ?”

“No.”

That was a negative strong enough to have crushed some men, but it only acted as a spur on the proprietor of the museum.

“Then I should advise you to go up, sir. I was there this morning, just casting an eye round for spars and crystals, and natural hist’ry specimens in general, and Mr Gartram’s men have blasted out some of the finest stones I think I ever saw.”

Wimble waited for an answer, but none came ; and, after a little snipping, which was all done with the operator’s head very much on one side, he continued,—

“ Fine property, that of Mr Gartram’s, sir. Grand estate.”

Chris felt as if he would have liked to gag the barber with his own lather brush. But he sat still, holding his breath while the man prattled on.

“ You said much off, sir ? yes, sir ; very good plan, sir ; keeps the head cool, and after a wash or a shampoo, just a rub with the towel and there you are. I often admire our visitor, Mr Glyddyr, for that, sir.”

Chris flinched.

“ Don’t be alarmed, sir ; only the scissors touched the skin ; cold steel, sir. Keeps his hair very short, sir ; quite like a Frenchman. Wonderfully fond of our town, sir. His yacht’s always here.”

Chris grunted, and wished he had not come to have his hair cut, as the man innocently prattled on.

“ If I might take the liberty of saying so, why don’t you take to a yacht ? ”

“ Can’t afford it,” said Chris bluntly.

Wimble uttered a little laugh that suggested disbelief.

“They do say, sir, as this Mr Glyddyr is making up to Miss Gartram, sir.”

Chris set his teeth hard. He could not jump up and run out of the place with his hair half cut.

“And that Mr Gartram is set upon it, sir. Well, it’s a fine opening for any young man, I’m sure. Mr Gartram must have a deal of money up yonder. I often wonder he has never been robbed—that’s it, sir. The other side, please: thank you. Stone walls and bolts and bars are all very well, but, as I said to Doctor Asher when I was cutting him the other day—If a man wants to commit a robbery, stone walls and iron bars is no use. ‘No, sir,’ I says, ‘there’s sure to be times when doors is open and iron bars undone, and those are the times that a thief and a robber would choose.’”

“Humph!” ejaculated Chris. “So you think there are times when a man might easily rob Mr Gartram?”

“I do, sir, indeed; and if you’ll believe me——there, I wouldn’t have his money and live as he does for anything.”

"Ah, well, I won't believe you," said Chris drily.

"But you may, sir. Yes, sir, it isn't safe to live with so much money in your house."

"Well, I'll tell Mr Gartram what you say."

The scissors dropped on the floor with a crash, and Wimble stood, wide-eyed, and harrowing his thin whiskers with his comb.

"What's the matter?"

"I beg pardon, sir," faltered the barber ;  
"you said—"

"That I'd tell Mr Gartram."

"I—I—I beg your pardon, Mr Lisle, sir ; don't do that. Mr Gartram's my landlord—a hard man, sir, in paint and repairs ; and if he knew that I'd said such a thing about him being robbed or murdered, why, I do believe, sir, he'd turn me out of house and home."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Chris gruffly.  
"Lesson to you to hold your tongue."

This was so decided a rebuff that Wimble frowned, picked up his scissors, and went on snipping in silence for nearly half a minute, when the desire to talk, or habit of using his

jaws in concert with the opening and shutting of his scissors, mastered him again.

“If I might be so bold as ask, sir, Mrs Sarson quite well?”

“Yes, quite well.”

“Most amiable woman, sir,” said the barber. “Her house always seems to me as if it might take a prize—so beautifully kept, sir—so delicately clean.”

“Yes.”

“I often wonder she hasn’t married again.”

Chris had heard hints from his landlady about an offer of marriage from the owner of the museum, but it had slipped from his memory till now, when the suggestive remark brought it all back, and a mischievous spirit seemed to enter into him.

He could not find it in his heart to bully the man, whose prattling gossip was a part of his trade, but he could vex him and revenge himself in another way for the annoyance Wimble was inflicting, and with boyish love of mischief he replied,—

“Yes; so do I. But perhaps it is probable.”

Wimble checked his scissors as they were half way through a tuft of hair.

"Indeed, sir?" he said, as he went on snipping. "Yes; of course you, being, as you may say, one of the family, and living on the premises, would know."

"Yes," said Chris, in a tone suggestive of much knowledge; and then there was an interval of snipping, and Wimble coughed.

"If one might say so, sir," he said, "that was a most gallant act of yours the other day."

"Eh? What was?"

"Swimming out after that handsome French lady, and saving her life."

"Pooh! Nonsense!" said Chris pettishly.

"But it was, sir. People talk about it a deal."

"More fools they."

"Yes, sir; but people will talk."

"Yes," said Chris meaningly; "they will."

"Yes, sir; and it's wonderful what a man will go through for a woman's sake—I mean a gentleman for a lady."

"You miserable little pump," muttered Chris to himself.

“Elderly gentleman, or young, sir?” said Wimble insinuatingly.

“Eh? What do you mean?”

“What you said, sir, about Mrs Sarson, sir—her future, sir.”

“Oh, you mustn’t ask me, Mr Wimble. It would be very much out of place for me to say anything. Done?”

“One minute, sir. Anything on, sir? Lime cream?”

“No; just a brush.—Thanks; that will do.—Good morning.”

Trifling words do a great deal of mischief sometimes, and Chris Lisle’s had the effect of making the owner of the museum stand at his door with his head sidewise, watching his last client till he was out of sight, and as he went down the street, dark thoughts entered his mind about age and good looks and opportunity; of the result of his own observations in life as to the weakness of elderly ladies for youth; and one by one ideas came into his mind such as had never been there before.

“If it does turn out so,” he muttered, as he slowly went back into his place of business, and

apostrophised the head of a huge dog-fish which had been preserved and furnished with two glass eyes, asquint, and whose drying had resulted in a peculiar one-sided smile ; “ yes, if it does turn out so, I hope, for his sake and mine, he will not come here to be shaved.”

His thoughts had such a terrible effect upon Michael Wimble, that he took a razor from where it reposed in one of a series of leather loops against the wall, opened it, seized a leather strap which hung by one end from a table, and began to whet the implement with a degree of savage energy that was startling.

Chris had his hair cut, and his head felt easier, but the barber's did not.

## CHAPTER III.

### GLYDDYR SEES THE GOLDEN CAVE.

FAITHFUL to his time of tryst with Gartram, Glyddyr made his way up to the Fort that morning, thinking deeply of his position, and wondering whether Gartram had good news to report.

He reached the frowning gateway, went along the granite-paved passage, and was passing the end of the terrace walk which ran along the front of the house, when he caught sight of a dress just as the wearer passed round the corner of the house to the garden formed at the end.

"Claude or Mary," he said to himself. "Shall I? The old man likes me to make myself at home, and it may mean a *tête-à-tête* there, overlooking the sea. I will."

With a sinister smile he turned off to the left, instead of going up to the door. He went by the bay window of the dining-room, and was in the act of passing that of Gartram's

study when the robin flew out of the feathery tamarisk, and as he was looking at the flight of the bird, he turned sharply, for a curious, gasping cry came from the room on the right.

He ran into the room, instinctively feeling what was wrong, and in nowise surprised to find that Gartram was struggling in a fit upon the carpet.

His first act was to drag away the chairs nearest to the suffering man, and then to try and place him in a position so that he would not be likely to suffer from strangulation.

“It’s very horrid,” he muttered, “and will frighten the poor girl almost to death; but I must ring—no: I’ll go for help.”

He stopped short, for his eyes lit upon the bags and loose coin upon the table, and then upon the open safe, towards which he seemed drawn, as if fascinated.

“By George!” he muttered, after glancing back at where Gartram lay, perfectly insensible to what went on around him. “Monte Christo, and—”

He paused, and looked stealthily about, feeling giddy the while, as a great temptation assailed him, making him turn pale.

But he mastered the feeling directly, and after a moment's thought swept the money back into the receptacle, and carried it and the book to the safe.

"Poor old chap!" he thought. "I needn't stoop to steal when he is so ready to give it all."

He closed the door quickly, and locked it, then drew back and grasped the idea of how it was hidden directly, turning the great panel of the bookcase on its pivot, and closing in the iron door.

He had just finished this and relocked the place, which he was able to do after a little puzzling, when he saw that the fit was growing more severe, and at the same time noted the open drawer in the table.

"Keep the keys there," he said to himself, as he replaced them and closed the drawer. "There, that's what he would have wished his son-in-law elect to do for him, so now for help."

He bent over Gartram for a moment, and shrank slightly from the distorted face and rolling eyes. Then, going to the door, he turned the handle.

"Locked!" he exclaimed, "to keep out in-

terruption and prying eyes. Well, old fellow, I am in your secret, and know the open sesame of the golden cave, so we shall see."

He turned the key, threw open the door, and hurried into the hall, but ran back directly, and, glancing at Gartram as he did so, pulled the bell sharply.

Almost as he reached the door, Sarah Woodham and one of the servants entered the hall.

"Here, you," he said quickly to the dark, stern-looking woman, "send at once for the doctor; your master is in a fit."

Sarah turned to her fellow-servant, gave her the required instructions, and followed Glyddyr back into the study.

"Where are the young ladies?" he said. "Don't let them come."

"They must know, sir," said the woman, going down on one knee to place Gartram's head in a more natural position. "Miss Claude would not forgive me if she was not told."

Almost at the same moment, a step was heard on the terrace outside. Mary came by, humming a tune to herself, glanced in, and, seeing what was wrong, darted away.

The next minute she and Claude were there, aiding in every possible way till the doctor's step was heard in the hall.

He came in directly, and gave two or three short, quick orders, almost the first being to dismiss every one but Sarah Woodham.

"Go into the drawing-room," he said. "I'll call if I want any help. He'll soon come round now. What has been the matter; some fresh excitement?"

Claude's countenance was full of trouble, but she made no reply. Still, she could not help glancing at Glyddyr, and to her shame and annoyance found that he was looking at her in an eager, imploring way, as he held open the door for her to pass out, and then followed.

"He's coming into the drawing-room, Mary," Claude whispered. "I cannot speak. Pray say something to send him away."

There was no need for Mary to speak. Glyddyr came up to Claude at once, and took her hand.

"I cannot tell you how grieved I am, Miss Gartram," he whispered, in a voice full of sym-

pathy. "Your father invited me to call upon him this morning, and when I came I found him lying in his room as you saw."

He did not explain which way he entered, and for the time no one thought it strange.

Then there was silence, and Claude, after a vain attempt to control her emotion and speech, tried to withdraw her hand, but it was held fast.

"I am on the horns of a dilemma," continued Glyddyr—"puzzled. I want to show my sympathy, and to be of help, but I cannot see in which way I can be of most service—by staying or by leaving at once."

"By going, Mr Glyddyr. Pray leave us now. You can indeed do nothing."

"I will obey your lightest wish," he said eagerly. "You have only to speak."

"Then, pray, go."

He raised the hand he held to his lips, and pressed it long and tenderly, till it was hastily withdrawn, and then, bowing only to Mary, he went quickly from the room.

"Bless the fit!" he said to himself. "Brought me a bit nearer to her haughty

ladyship. Bah ! it's only a question of time."

It was in Claude's heart to relate her interview with her father that morning, but she shrank from speaking ; and her attention was taken up by the entrance of the doctor.

"Better," he said ; "decidedly better."

"Can I go to him ?"

"If you wish it. But your entrance might disturb him now, as he has just sunk into a peaceful sleep. Mrs Woodham is watching him, and will call you if there is any need. But, believe me, there will be none. He'll sleep for some hours, and then wake quite himself ; but, of course, very irritable and strange. You will then see that he has the medicine I have left for him, and after an hour that which I shall send on."

"Yes, doctor."

"Either administer it yourself, or let that woman give it to him. Don't trust Mr Gartram."

"Not trust him ?"

"No ; he will neglect it, and then take a double dose to make up for it, and that will not do. Regularity, and keeping himself under the influence of the drug, is what we want."

“I will attend to it myself,” said Claude.

“And when you are going to be away, let Mrs Woodham administer it. Perhaps it would be better to leave it entirely to her.”

“Oh, no ; I would rather keep it under my own eye. You will come in again soon ?”

“I begin to be ashamed of coming so often,” said the doctor, smiling, “and ask myself whether my treatment is right.”

“Oh, I have perfect faith in that,” said Claude, “and so has my father.”

“Thank you,” he said smiling.

“Now, please, tell me, Doctor Asher, the simple truth.”

“Why, of course.”

“You smile, and you say that out of mere politeness, and to make me comfortable. I want to know the truth.”

“Now, my dear child—”

“But I am not a child, Doctor Asher. Once a child to you is to be always a child. Can you not see that I am a grown woman, full of a woman’s trouble’s ?”

“I beg your pardon, Miss Gartram. You shall not complain again.”

“Then tell me without any disguise—is my father’s life in danger?”

“Rest assured that it is not.”

“Thank heaven!”

“But I must tell you this—I can do nothing to arrest these fits—”

“These terrible fits!” sighed Claude.

“—without I have his co-operation, for so much depends upon his living a quiet, peaceful life, without throwing himself into these violent fits of temper. You force me to speak plainly, but, of course, it is between us. If he knew that I said what I do, it would have a bad effect upon him, and send him into another passion.”

“But what can I do?” said Claude her eyes filling with tears.

“Use your woman’s wit. I can give you no better counsel. You must be the cooling oil to stop the friction when you see it arising; and, above all, never thwart him in anything upon which he has set his mind.”

A great sob struggled for exit in Claude’s breast as she heard the doctor’s words, which were more full of meaning to her than he

realised, and she glanced round, to see that her cousin was watching her closely.

“I will do my best,” she said.

“That’s well,” said Asher, giving his white hands a soft rub together as he smiled from one to the other. “‘What can’t be cured must be endured,’ young ladies ; but I do not say that this cannot be cured. We will do our best, but the patient must be made to help. Does he take his medicine regularly ?”

Claude shook her head.

“I thought not. Flies to it, I suppose, when he feels bad, and neglects it at other times.”

“But that other medicine, doctor—the chloral which he takes—is it good for him ?”

Asher shook his head.

“Then why do you let him have it ?”

“My dear young lady, is not that rather unreasonable ? Now, look here ; supposing I were to say, ‘Mr Gartram, chloral is ruining your system,’ what would he reply ?”

Claude shook her head.

“I appeal to you, Miss Dillon ; what do you think your uncle would say ?”

“Go to the devil !” said Mary quietly.

“ Mary ! ”

“ Well, he would, Claudie, and you know it.”

“ Miss Dillon is quite right,” said the doctor, rubbing his hands. “ Strong but truthful ; chloral he will have, and if he keeps to it as I prescribe—in moderation—it will not do him much harm, but tend to calm him. There, I’ll look in again. He is going on as well as can be.”

“ Shall we go and sit with him ? ”

“ N—no ; I hardly think it necessary. You can do no good. I have given Sarah Woodham the fullest instructions, and I’ll come in again this evening.”

The doctor left, and as soon as he was gone, Mary Dillon shook her head.

“ Poor Claudie ! ” she whispered. “ Mustn’t thwart uncle in any of his wishes. And it means so much, doesn’t it ? ”

“ Master would like to see you, Miss Claude,” said Sarah Woodham, coming to the door.

“ Not worse, Sarah ? ”

“ No, miss ; better, I think.”

Claude followed her into the passage on her way to her father’s room, but the woman arrested her.

"Miss Claude, may I say a word to you?"

"Yes, certainly. What is it?"

"I've been thinking this all over, my dear, and after giving it a fair trial, I want you to let me go again."

"Now, Sarah—"

"Pray listen to me, miss. Master does not like me, for I make him think of poor Woodham; and I'm a bad nurse, and I feel sometimes as if I couldn't bear it."

"You are not a bad nurse," said Claude, taking the woman's hand; "but you feel it hard work to settle down again—that is all."

"No, no, miss, it isn't only that," said the woman wildly. "But let me speak to you again, my dear; he wants you now."

Claude nodded to her smilingly, and hurried into her father's room, leaving the woman standing with knitted brow, and hands clasped.

She looked fixedly at the door, uttered a sigh, and went to her room, to sit thinking deeply of the duty she was called upon to perform, just as her love for Claude was fast growing.

## CHAPTER IV.

### IN THE SHADOW.

“DON'T you think papa seems much better, Sarah?” said Claude one day.

She was busy in the store-room, playing the part of mistress at the Fort, and giving out sundry and domestic necessities to the old servant, who was watching her intently, and leaning over her with a singularly intent look in her eyes which seemed to soften her hard countenance.

“Yes, my dear; it is some time since he has had a fit.”

“Let me see; you will want rice and more coffee.”

“And macaroni,” said Sarah quietly.

“No; don't have rice and macaroni. Tell cook not to send up two farinaceous puddings the same day. It annoys papa.”

“Because they are good for him,” said Sarah drily.

“Ah!” said Claude, turning upon her sharply, but with a playful manner; “you must not censure sick people. Why, Sarah, what makes you watch me so intently?”

There were tears in the woman’s eyes, as, with a hysterical catching of the breath, she took hold of the hand which was passing her a package, and pressed it passionately to her lips, kissing it again and again.

“Sarah!”

“Don’t be angry with me, my dear. I’m not the same as I used to be. Trouble has changed me; I couldn’t help it. When I see you grown up into such a beautiful woman, so calm and quiet and ladylike, quite the mistress of the house, and talking as you do, it gives me a catching in the throat.”

“You are not well.”

“Yes, my dear, quite well; but it makes me think of the tiny girl who used to love me so, and whose pretty little arms were thrown about my neck, and who kissed me every night when she went to bed.”

“Yes; but I was a little girl then.”

“You were, my dear; and don’t you re-

member, when I heard you say your prayers, it was always, 'Pray God, bless Sarah,' as well as those whom it was your duty to pray for. Ah, Miss Claude, you used to love me then."

"And how do you know that I do not love you now?"

"Ah, that's all changed, my dear. You are no longer a little girl."

"But I do love you now."

"No, no, my dear; not as you used to."

"And keep still to the simple old form of prayer I was taught as a child, with a word for the poor, stricken old friend who was always so tender and loving to me."

"No," said the woman sadly.

"Sarah!"

"Yes, yes, yes; you do, my own darling," she cried, as she sank upon her knees and pressed Claude's hand to her cheek. "You do, you must, and you have shown it to me by what you have done. I'm a wicked, ungrateful wretch."

"No, no, no; be calm, be calm," whispered Claude soothingly.

"No, my dear, there is no more happiness

and rest for me. You do not know—you do not know.”

“I know my poor old nurse is in sad trouble, and that there must be times when she feels all the past cruelly. But do you forget what we are taught about patience under affliction? Do you ever pray for help to bear all this as you should?”

“No, no,” cried the woman fiercely; “I feel sometimes as if I dare not pray.”

“There, there,” said Claude, laying her hand tenderly upon the woman’s arm, “you must not talk like that. You are ill and upset to-day. Try and be patient. Come, you are not quite alone in the world, Sarah. I am your friend.”

The woman kissed her hand again passionately, as she moaned to herself in the agony of her spirit, for there before her she seemed to see her husband’s reproachful eyes, and to hear his voice as he bade her be strong, and keep down all weak feelings of love for others till she had accomplished the terrible revenge.

“Come, come, come,” said Claude gently. “I was in hopes that you were growing

happier and more contented. Try to be. Time will soften all this pain. I know how terribly you have suffered, and that my words must sound very weak and commonplace to you; but you will be more patient, and bear all this."

The agonising emotion seemed to choke all utterance, for a fierce battle was going on within the woman's breast. Love for her young mistress strove with the feeling of duty to the dead, and the superstitious horror of breaking that vow voluntarily; and at last, excusing herself, she hurried away to her room to lock herself in, and throw herself upon her knees to pray for help—to pray that she might be forgiven, and spared from the terrible task placed upon her as a duty to fulfil.

But no comfort came, only a hard sensation of fate drawing her on till she grew feverish and restless. Red spots burned in her sallow cheeks, and she rose from her knees at last with a heavy, lowering look in her eyes, as she muttered to herself,—

"Yes, it must be done. It is fate. He knew better than I, and saw with dying eyes

what was right. Yes, I cannot go back now."

That night Sarah Woodham lay long awake, suffering a mental agony such as comes to the lot of few. Her woman's nature rebelled against her fate, for beneath the hard, morose shell there was an abundance of the gentle milk of human kindness; but her long married training in the hard letter of the sect to which her husband belonged had placed her self-styled duty so to the front that it had become an idol—a stern, tyrannical idol, who must at all costs be obeyed, and she shrank with horror, as at a sin of the most terrible nature, from daring to disobey the injunction laid upon her by the dead.

Religion belief and superstitious dread joined hand in hand to force her onward, and she lay shivering in her bed, reproaching herself for striving to escape from the fulfilment of her husband's last command.

Night after night she suffered a martyrdom; but upon this particular occasion it seemed to her that she was in close communication with the unseen, and, with eyes wild and strained,

she kept trying to pierce the darkness, lying in anticipation of some severe reproof for tarrying so long.

Hours had passed, but sleep would not come ; and at last, in a desponding voice, she moaned,—

“It is too much. I am only a poor weak woman. Isaac, Isaac, husband, my burden is greater than I can bear.”

The words she had uttered aloud startled her, and she lay trembling, but they seemed to have relieved her over-burdened heart, and a feeling of calm restfulness gradually stole over her, and she slept, with the tears slowly stealing from beneath her closed lids.

“Isaac, husband, for her sake don't ask me to do this thing.”

The words came in a hurried whisper, telling too plainly that, even in sleep, the rest had not quite calmed her tortured brain, for the task was there, and she moaned again and again piteously, as if continuing her appeal for mercy.

But in her imagination there was none. Her eyes had hardly closed before she seemed to be back in the cottage listening to the dying man's

utterances, full of bigoted intolerance and hate, bidding her avenge him ; and at last she started up in bed with a cry of horror, to sit there pressing her wet dark hair back from her brow, and staring wildly into the darkest corner of the room.

“ Yes, I hear,” she said, in a hoarse whisper. “ I have tried indeed ; but you don’t know. I am only a poor, weak creature, and it is so hard—so hard, but I will—I will.”

She sat there for fully two hours rocking herself to and fro, weeping, praying, but finding no relief. She threw herself down at last, and for a few moments the cool pillow relieved the agony of her throbbing temples ; but only for the time, and then it was as hot as her fevered head.

“ If I could only sleep,” she groaned ; “ if I could only sleep and forget.”

But the sleep that gathers up the ravelled sleeve of care would not come ; and at last in despair she rose, bathed her burning temples, and then hurriedly began to dress.

“ I cannot bear it longer,” she muttered ; “ I cannot bear it.”

Drawing the curtain aside, she saw that it was still night, and that her sleep, with its agonising dreams, must have been of the briefest kind, and going to her dressing-table she took her watch—the heavy silver watch that had been her husband's—from the stand where it hung to act as a little timepiece; but though she held it in various positions close to the window, the reflection of the moonlight which bathed the farther side of the house was not sufficient, and she opened the watch and trusted to her sense of touch.

Here she was more successful, for, passing her forefinger lightly over the dial, she arrived at a fairly accurate knowledge of the time—half-past two.

Setting her teeth hard, she went on dressing, muttering the while, a word from time to time being perfectly audible, and telling the direction of her thoughts.

“I must—fought against it. Maddening—wrong or right—must—poor master—must—I must.”

Each word was uttered in company with a jerk given to every button or string; and at last

she stood thinking by the door, not hesitating but making up her mind as to her course.

The dread and its accompanying trembling were gone now. In their place was active determination as to the course she meant to take, and with a long-drawn breath she unfastened her door, and passed out into the utter darkness of the passage and landing.

There was something weird and spiritualised about her appearance as she passed on to the stairs, and descended, the faint light shed by the glimmering stars through a skylight just making it evident that something was moving slowly down the steps, while the faint brushing sound of her dress seemed more like the whispering of the wind than a noise made by some one passing down the hard granite flight.

She paused for a few moments by the door of Claude's room, as if listening ; and again a sigh escaped her as she went on silently, awake to the fact that the slightest noise might arouse her master, who would, if not plunged in a drug-contrived stupor, be lying sleepless listening to every sound.

But she passed on down the last flight of steps, across the hall, and without hesitation laid her hand upon the handle of the study door.

“Locked !” she said to herself, the thought occurring directly that the reason was hers, for she recalled fastening the door.

There was a slight grating sound and a sharp crack as she turned the key ; but they had no effect upon the woman who, now that she had determined upon her course, seemed as if she would stop at nothing.

The darkness in the study was profound ; not even a gleam from the stars passing through the window, which was shuttered, and the curtains drawn. But, as if light were not needed in her mission, the woman went on across the room, avoiding the various articles of furniture in a way that was marvellous, and hardly making a sound till she turned the key of the oak cabinet, which creaked sharply as the door was thrown open.

Then came the clink of bottle against bottle, and the squeaking sound of a cork, followed by the gurgling of a liquid being poured out. The noise of the cork, the tap of the bottom

of the bottle on being replaced, and then the closing and locking of the door followed.

Sarah Woodham was about to cross the room back to the door, satisfied with the successful issue of her mission, which would have been thwarted had there been no key in the lock, when the sound of the handle of the door being moved made her start towards the window. Her first idea was to throw one of the curtains round her, but there was no time, and she stood motionless in the dark, listening, under the impression that Claude had heard her come down, and had followed.

A low cough undeceived her, and a chill of horror ran through her frame as she realised the fact that it was her master.

He must have been awake and watchful, and she stood there trying to stop the beating of her heart, as she felt that she had been discovered.

But Gartram slowly crossed the room, and in imagination she saw his hands outstretched as he felt his way to avoid coming in contact with the table. The next moment her spirits began to rise, for she understood why he had

come down. There was no doubt about it, for she heard his hands touch the cabinet, the lock snap, and then there was a sharp, clicking sound, and she knew that he had knocked over a bottle on the shelf.

“Confoundedly dark!” he muttered; and Sarah Woodham held her breath as she heard him move, and another sound.

She knew well enough what it meant. He had gone to a side table, and was feeling for the silver match-box which always stood beside the inkstand.

Sarah stretched out a hand behind her as she took a step backward. Then she paused, for a sudden silence in the room warned her that Gartram was listening. But the next moment the rattling of the matches was heard, and *crick, crick, crack*, the striking of one upon a metallic box, and a line of faint sparks threw up for the moment the figure of Gartram, with his back to her bending over the table—a black silhouette seen for a moment, and then all profound darkness once more.

*Crick, crick, crack!* two bright points of light, then a flash, but the curtain was drawn

aside, and fell back in front of the woman as the match blazed up ; and, though she could not see, Sarah Woodham felt that Gartram had turned sharply and was holding up the burning wax match to give a hasty glance round the room, before he applied it to a candle standing in the bronze inkstand.

The perspiration oozed out upon her brow, for she felt that her master must have seen the curtain quivering, and be coming to drag it aside.

“What shall I say ?” she thought.

But Gartram did not come to the curtain ; and, gaining courage, Sarah peered cautiously, but with her heart beating wildly, through the narrow opening between the two curtains, to see him go back to the cabinet, pick up the fallen bottle, remove the cork, pour a certain amount into a medicine glass, set it down, after he had tossed off the liquid, and then close the cabinet.

“Hah !” he ejaculated, with a sigh of satisfaction ; and Sarah Woodham shivered again as the cold dank moisture gathered together, first in dew, then in the great drops of agony upon her face, and slowly trickled down.

It did not seem as if Gartram was suspicious, and likely to come toward the window ; but the terror from which she suffered became so acute that she felt as if she must cry out in her alarm ; for it seemed as if fate was now working with her, and that now she would be able to sleep without the haunting horror of her husband's presence always near her, always upbraiding her for the task she had left undone.

“ Hah ! ” ejaculated Gartram again ; and she heard him move, but she did not dare to stir to see if he were coming toward the curtain.

It appeared like an hour before the light was suddenly extinguished, and a heavy, dull sound of steps going over the carpet was heard ; then the door handle rattled, and she felt that she was safe. But it was only for a moment ; a low muttering arose, and the steps came back into the room ; then there was a heavy creaking noise of springs and of stiff leather, and she knew that Gartram had thrown himself into the big easy chair.

There was a pause, during which the listener could count the heavy, slow beating of her

heart, which seemed to stop directly, as Gartram spoke aloud,—

“The very sight of a bed seems to drive it away. As if there was no more rest. Rich beyond my wildest dreams, and what is it but a curse! If I could only sleep—if I could only sleep!”

There was a long, low, piteous sigh, followed by mutterings, some slow and gently uttered, others quick and angry. Then a long pause, during which, with heavily-beating heart, the woman stood listening for her master's next utterances, and thinking of how this man prayed for sleep. What then if it came now? He took these drugs for sleep; suppose that sleep were to come—the long, long, restful sleep from which there is no waking here?

Her eyes seemed to pierce the heavy cloth which hung between them, and she saw him going off into a deeper and deeper sleep, saw the day come stealing in through the cracks, and a faint and ghastly ray fall athwart the hard, stern face of the sleeping man, which she felt, as in a nightmare, compelled to watch, as it grew more grey and hard and fixed. Then

there were sounds without—in the hall. She knew the step, it was Claude's, and there was a tap at the door, and a voice calling gently,—

“Father—papa. Father, dear, are you there? Are you asleep?”

“Claude, my darling,” she moaned, as the girl entered and went softly to the chair to lay her hand gently upon his brow; and then there was a sigh as she bent down, kissed him, and then went softly out.

Sarah Woodham's heart seemed still and frozen within her, and the horrible feeling of dread and despair increased, so real had all this seemed. But it was a vision conjured up by a guilty brain, for it was still dark, and there was no sound in the room but a regular, heavy breathing, telling that Gartram had found at last the sleep that refused to obey him in his chamber.

Sarah listened. He was asleep, and the trembling and dread came upon her again, to be horribly emphasised, but to be followed by a sensation full of resentment, as Gartram turned suddenly in his chair, and said loudly,—

“Curse him! It was no fault of mine. He

seems to haunt me. Is there never to be any peace?"

Sarah Woodham had clutched the curtain, and held it tightly in her hand as he spoke, and she stood there in the darkness gazing in the direction of the chair, resentful and fierce now; the feelings of remorse were all swept away, and the cold, stern determination with which she had received her husband's commands came back.

An hour must have passed before she attempted to move; then her hand went slowly to a bottle thrust into her breast, and she stepped slowly out from the embayment of the window to stand close by the sleeping man, listening to his heavy, stertorous breathing for some time before silently crossing the study, and passing out into the hall.

A few minutes later she was in her own room, heaving a piteous sigh as she gazed out at the faint light in the east before throwing herself, dressed, upon the bed, and sleeping heavily at once.

## CHAPTER V.

### APPROACHING A CRISIS.

“ HERE I am again, Glyddyr. How are you, old chap ? ”

Glyddyr was seated in the cabin of his yacht, thinking over his position, and of how long it would be before Claude would consent to the marriage taking place

He had no fear of his ultimate success, for he had seen enough of Gartram to know that his will was law, and that, even if Claude were thoroughly opposed to the match, she would be obliged to consent.

But he could not conceal from himself the fact that it might be a long time first, press it on how he might ; and till then he would be the abject slave of the man in whose clutches he had placed himself.

He had not seen the boat leave the shore, where his men had gone to obtain stores, and,

taking advantage of its being at the harbour, Gellow had stepped in, had himself rowed on board, and, walking along the deck giving the little crew a supercilious look, he had gone down to where Glyddyr was seated, and addressed him.

“What do you want?” was the reply, delivered in a surly voice.

“What do I want? Why, as the little ragged boy said in *Punch*, ‘heverythink.’ In my case, specially money.”

Glyddyr made an impatient movement.

“Oh, it’s a fact, dear boy. Times have not been rosy lately, and I’ve got low in the banking account. So, as my dear old friend Glyddyr has had his little slice of luck, I said I’d run down and tap him.”

“What do you mean—what slice of luck?”

“The wind that blows no one any good, dear boy; but the ill wind must have blown you a lot of good.”

“What do you mean?”

“What did you put on her?”

“Nothing.”

“What?”

"I said nothing."

"Oh, yes. You said so, and you didn't mean it."

"I tell you I did not back the horse."

"But I sent you the last tip—one worth a hundred thousand pounds. I was thinking of sending it to the Marquis, but he's a mean cuss. and I knew you'd stump up handsome afterwards to the man who helped you. Come—between friends, you know—what did you land?"

"I tell you I did not back the horse."

"Get along with you! None of your games. Come along, old fellow, let's have it. What did you pocket?"

"Nothing."

"Glyddyr, my dear boy, don't say that you didn't get the telegram in time."

"No; I got it in time."

"Oh, come, that's right; and you did back it. Get out with your talking like that. You gave me a cold chill all down my back."

"Hang it, man, how many more times am I to speak? I tell you I did not back the horse."

"What! You let such a chance go by? You actually fooled away money like that!"

"I don't know what you mean by fooled away money."

"Why, it is fooling away money to let such a chance as that go by you."

"How was I to know it was a good chance?" cried Glyddyr savagely.

"Why, didn't I send it to you?"

"Yes; and how many times have you sent me tips which have turned out frauds, and I've lost my money?"

"Well, but nobody can be sure, that's a certainty."

"No! Yours never were."

"Oh, but this is absurd. No. I see through your game. You're gammoning me. You did work it all right."

"Hark, here," cried Glyddyr; "if you wish me to kick you out of my cabin, say that again."

Gellow blew out his cheeks, and quickly sucked them in. Then he threw his right leg over his left, and then he threw his left over his right, balanced his ivory-handled crutch-stick, and ended by bringing the end down upon the cabin floor in the attempt.

"Oh, very well," he said coldly, and the

man's manner completely changed. "I won't brave you to kick me out of my own cabin, Mr Glyddyr. You see I could just sign a paper or two, and then I could kick you out."

"What!"

"Without lifting my foot, sir. I've always been a gentleman to you, Mr Glyddyr, and you've always been a bully to me. I wanted to be friends, and I've helped you with money till I've pinched myself, and I've helped you to throw your wife off the scent."

"She is not my wife."

"I don't know anything about that. Out of politeness one is bound to believe a lady, and she says she is your wife, sir."

"It is false."

"Ah, well, that's nothing to me, sir. That's your own affair. Settle it between you. Why, I consider that I've put two fortunes in your way, sir. You've kicked over one; what are you going to do with the other?"

Glyddyr scowled at him.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr Glyddyr. Like my confounded impudence to ask. I'm

off back to town. No message for Madame Denise, I suppose ?”

“No.”

“Very good, very good, sir. Good day.”

“Good day,” said Glyddyr shortly, and his visitor walked to the door of the tiny saloon, set his hat jauntily on one side, and then turned and came back, and rested his hands upon the back of the nearest seat.

“Oh, by the way, Mr Glyddyr, I think I did hint that I was rather short of the ready. Be good enough to write me a cheque for a thou. on account.”

Glyddyr winced.

“I have no money in hand,” he said abruptly.

“All nonsense, my dear sir ; don’t trifle with a man. You must be rolling in coin. One thou., please.”

“I tell you I have no money.’

“Very well, then, my dear sir, ve—ry well ; be good enough to get it. I shall rely upon you, for I must have some within a week.”

He turned right round and walked to the door again, and then turned and said smilingly, —

"Sorry to trouble you, but may your men row me ashore?"

"Yes, of course. But stop. Look here, Gellow."

"Very sorry to have worried you, Mr Glyddyr. One thou., please, within seven days."

"But it will be inconvenient. I can't raise the money in the time. I—look here. Why, confound the man! Here, Gellow!"

There was no reply, and angry, mortified, humbled by his impecunious position, Glyddyr hurried on to the deck, and found that his visitor was already in the boat, and several yards away from the yacht's side.

"Look here, Gellow," he cried.

"Eh? Please write. Can't stop. Be just able to catch the next train and get in by to-morrow morning. Pull away, my lads; a shilling a-piece for beer if you look sharp."

Glyddyr ground his teeth with rage as he gazed after his spider, and felt how thoroughly he had been bound up like a fly of fashion in the wretched schemer's web.

He could have yelled after him to come back.

but his men were on deck and in the boat which bore his tyrant away ; and in those moments the man seemed to live a life of repentance for having placed himself in the power of such a creature as this. As it was, he could only stand looking at the receding boat in a nonchalant manner, and then turn slowly round, and descend to the cabin.

“ What am I to do ? ” he said to himself. “ I must write to him apologetically, and ask for time. No ; I can’t do it. I’d sooner suffer anything than be humbled further by the wretched cad ! ”

He flung himself in an easy-chair, and began to agitate it to and fro, grinding his teeth the while with rage.

“ If I could only borrow the money ! If I could only get hold of enough to clear myself from this brute, I could — ”

He stopped short, and sat staring before him through one of the little open round port windows over the glittering sea, at the Fort, which stood up clear-cut and grey in the vivid sunshine ; and as he gazed at the great castellated building, a strange idea came to him, one

which made him picture the interior of that study as it appeared to him on the occasion of his entering through the window to find Gartram lying there insensible upon the floor.

"A thousand within seven days," he muttered to himself, and once more he glanced sharply round to see whether he was overheard.

He rose and paced the little cabin, only a few strides and a turn, but no idea came.

One moment he was for following Gellow, and pleading to him for time, the next the thought seemed too degrading, and he shrank from having to plead and humble himself before the common, insolent man who had him in his power.

"If he would only leave me alone I should soon be in a position to clear myself off, for Gartram is as rich as Cræsus."

As that thought came to him, he saw again the interior of the study and the open safe.

"And of course that is a mere nothing," he thought; "the eccentric old fellow would not have much of his money there. A thousand pounds. Why, it would be a trifle to him, and if I asked him he would lend it in an instant."

Glyddyr stopped short in his argument there.

“Would he lend it in an instant?”

“No,” said Glyddyr to himself directly afterwards. “He is too keen and hard a man. His idea is that I am above all money troubles, and if I try him it will be like killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. No; it would be ruin to attempt that and destroy all.”

With the impression upon him, though, that he would get out of his dilemma by Gellow repenting, knowing as he did that the sharp, sordid money-maker would calculate his chances of repayment too accurately to run any risks, Glyddyr returned on deck, to find that the gig had just returned from the shore after landing his incubus.

Springing in, he signed to the men to give way, and had himself rowed across to the rough pier, where he hesitated for a few minutes as to what he should do.

The sight of Chris Lisle striding along the cliff road decided him. A malicious look came into his face, and, thrusting his hands down in his pockets, he began to saunter along the pier, taking the short cut which led to Gartram's

private path, cut in a zig-zag up the cliff face, a direction which would only be taken by one going up to the Fort.

It was meant for Chris to see, and he saw it, suffering just as his rival intended, for there was a painful sting in the thought that this stranger should be free to come and go, while he, who had had the run of the place from boyhood, should be forbidden to approach.

Chris was no dissembler, there was no diplomatic concealment of the feelings in his actions ; he suffered, and he showed that he did as he encountered Glyddyr at the intersection of their ways, and retorted with a fierce look of anger when Glyddyr passed him with a supercilious smile full of contempt.

“How I could enjoy wringing that dog’s neck !” said Chris to himself. “He is going up there to the Fort to be made welcome and caressed, and treated as if he belonged to them, and— Oh, it does make me feel savage !”

He turned up into the stiff slope running away to the cliff top, and in a short time was where he could look down on the Fort and get glimpses of the garden, where, to his infinite

rage and pain, he soon after caught the glint of a white dress, then of one of the palest blue, and directly after there was a third party to form a trio, which sauntered up and down till he could bear it no longer, and walked right on.

“It’s of no use,” he said to himself; “I must see Claude and ask her what it all means. I can’t go on like this, seeing that man go to and fro as if he were accepted. It is too hard to be borne.”

He threw himself down at the top of the cliff, and lay gazing out to sea as he tried to settle his next proceedings. One thing was certain; he must see Claude, and come to a thorough understanding about their future. Then perhaps he could wait.

But how was he to obtain an interview?

Mary Dillon.

No; she had refused point blank to act against her uncle’s wishes, though she sympathised with both of them.

Claude would not meet him, nor yet correspond, but had told him to wait.

“And who can wait at a time like this?” he

cried. "If she only would not be quite so obedient," he continued, though all the time he knew in his heart that he loved her the more for her fulfilment of her father's commands.

No; it was of no use to think that she would consent to meet him by appointment, and there was no one person whom he cared to trust.

"It is so degrading," he said, "to have to place yourself and her at the mercy of some common, vindictive kind of creature, who has to be paid."

He was out of sight of the garden now, and its occupants, for he shrunk from watching Claude and her companion; but he was still well within view of a portion of the Fort and its defences.

"It is all very well," he thought, as he threw himself back, with his straw hat off, and his hands behind his head; "but if a clever, resolute burglar made up his mind to get into the old man's stronghold after all was locked up, how easy it would be. Why, I could climb up the sea-face quickly enough, and over the south wall, and then there is nothing

to hinder one but the moat, across which a man might wade in a pair of fishing-stockings."

A curious tingling sensation here attacked Chris Lisle, and the colour mounted into his cheek at the thoughts which came rushing through his brain.

Suppose he played the part of burglar, not to obtain any of the old man's hoarded-up coin, but that which was the sole desire of his life? Claude would never consent to a meeting, but if he took her by surprise, and once more clasped her in his arms, she could not really be so very angry, for she loved him; of that there could, after all, be no doubt, and for the sake of that sweet delight he would risk her displeasure. It would only be right, for he would be showing her how his heart was hers, and hers alone.

The cliff face? A bit dangerous, but he could do it easily, even the wall. Bah! he could climb a higher wall than that, while as to the drop of water in Gartram's moat, if he couldn't have waded it, he could have swam it, and would a thousand times so as to be once more near her.

“It’s a puzzle,” said Chris aloud. “Why, I ought to have done it long enough ago. How was it I didn’t think of it before?”

There was no mental answer to this, and his thoughts took another direction. He was comparatively a rich man now, but somehow he did not feel disposed to go and speak out again to Gartram, whose first question would be, “And, pray, how did you get this money?”

The cash had in each case been paid over to him the settling day with quite commercial promptitude, and lay at his bankers at Toxeter; but somehow Chris felt no richer, and the exultation he had expected was not there. Forty thousand pounds all his own, but he did not feel proud of it, and had sat up a night in his own room thinking of how little difference it made to a man, and, on the whole, feeling rather disappointed than otherwise at the result of his speculation.

But when was it to be? That night? The next night?

“I’ll try till I do meet her, and if the old man sees me, and flies at me—

“I wonder whether he keeps that revolver

loaded?" said Chris, half aloud, as he rose and began to descend the cliff. "Bah! If he does, he couldn't hit me in the dark, and hurry of his aim."

All the same, though, his active imagination was hard at work, showing him a series of dissolving views, in one of which a gallant youth was wading a deep fosse, with an irate parent standing on the bank, firing shot after shot, till in the dim light there was a fall and a splash as the aforesaid gallant youth fell back into the moat as he was crawling out, and not found until the next day.

Would Claude weep and break her heart? Would—

"A fellow of my age, with an ordinary share of brains, to go on dreaming and mooning over such sentimental nonsense!" cried Chris, half aloud. "He'd better shoot at me. If he does, hang me if I wait. I'll coax her into coming right away.

"By Jove! I'll try to-night. I wonder whether Mary would help me if she knew?"

## CHAPTER VI.

### GETTING LANGUID.

IF Chris Lisle had had a binocular with him when he climbed the great cliff slope, and looked down into Gartram's garden, he would not have felt those poignant, jealous pangs. His eyes were good, and he could see that female figures were in the garden, and, naturally enough, he concluded that they were Claude and Mary. Then he saw that another figure was there, a male—he could make that out—and he quite as naturally, as he had seen Glyddyr on his way to the Fort, concluded that this was he.

But, as it happened, when Glyddyr reached the house, he was shown into Gartram's room, where he was warmly received by that gentleman, who kept him talking and in torture, for there was the particular piece of the bookcase which he knew would open, and behind which lay sums of money, any fraction of which would set him free; and through the open

window, echoing from the stone walls, came the sounds of voices in the garden, where he longed to be.

“Oh, yes, infinitely better, my dear boy, and I want you to come up and dine here to-night. No ceremony. Quiet dinner, and cigars and coffee afterwards. Little music in the drawing-room, and a walk afterwards round the garden and on the terrace, eh? You see I don’t forget your interest, Glyddyr, now do I?”

“No, sir; indeed, I only wish that—”

“Claude would throw herself at your head. Nonsense! You like her all the better because she holds you off. Better worth the wooing, my boy. No hurry. Give me time. She’s yours, Glyddyr, and as to her fortune—there, she’s my only child, and I’m very simple in my tastes and outlay, so you leave that to me.”

What an opportunity for asking a loan!

“No; it would be madness,” thought Glyddyr, and he refrained, but a curious sensation attacked him, and thoughts ran through his brain, some of which startled him.

“Is that Miss Gartram in the garden?” he said.

"Yes, my boy, yes. Asher is out there having a chat with them. Come up to see me about these confounded attacks of mine. Sort of change in one's system, I suppose. Better soon. The worst of it is, that when I have one of these fits it seems to leave my brain a complete blank as to what has gone before. That last one, for instance, I can't recall how I was seized, nor what upset me. Ah, here they are."

Steps were heard outside, and directly after the little party appeared in sight, passing along the terrace by the study window towards the private entrance.

"Here! Hi! All of you come in this way," shouted Gartram, and then turned to Glyddyr. "There, you see, not much the matter with me to have a doctor always hanging about. But I can't sleep, Glyddyr, I can't sleep. Well, doctor, what do you think of the garden?"

"Delightful, my dear sir. Perfect."

"No, not perfect. Sea winds cut the things up too much. Regularly blast them sometimes. Here, come on one side; I want to talk to you about something else."

He looked sharply at Claude, who was listening politely to some remarks of Glyddyr, while Mary was turning over the leaves of a book.

"Mary, my dear, I wish you would go and write to those people about the carriage; it's quite time we heard from them. Oh, and by the way, there's your aunt; write to her."

"May I write here, uncle?"

"Eh? No. I shall want to sit down and write myself directly."

Claude's lips twitched, but she made no other sign, and Mary turned towards the door.

"It's very clever of you, uncle dear," she said to herself; "but it is of no use whatever."

As the door closed, Gartram, who had risen, took the doctor's arm, and walked with him towards the window.

"Look here," he said, "I wanted to speak to you about that stuff. It isn't strong enough. It used to be right, but I suppose I've got accustomed to it. Six months ago a dose sent me into a comfortable sleep. Now, two doses seem to have no effect whatever."

Glyddyr heard his words, and a singing

noise came in his ears, but Claude was beside him, and her father was evidently giving him a chance for a *tête-à-tête*.

“Will you have the bottles made stronger?” continued Gartram.

“Really—” began the doctor.

“There, now, you are going to make an excuse about my nerves being weak, or something of that sort. Nonsense, my dear sir; I’m as strong as a horse. Make it more powerful.”

“No. Really, Mr Gartram—”

“Oh, very well; then I shall take three times as much, and so get over you, doctor. You see you cannot help yourself. Claude, my dear,” he continued, turning sharply, “did you show Doctor Asher that new bam-boo—how it is getting on?”

“No, papa; I did not think of it,” said Claude, rising hastily.

“No, no. Just like you forgetful girls. I’ll show him. This way, doctor. What is it?—*Bambusa Metake*. I think that’s right. Come along. Rather a rare plant for this neighbourhood. — Give the young folks a chance, doctor, eh?”

"Yes, I see," said Asher, nodding and smiling, as he followed his patient out on to the terrace. "*Bambusa Metake*, eh?"

"Bamboo—bamboozle, doctor," cried Gartram, laughing. "Now, then, about this stuff. I must have it mixed up stronger."

"But it will be very bad for you. It is my duty to warn you of that."

"Not half so bad as to lie in bed all night cursing my misery because I cannot sleep. What is the use of life to me if I am to suffer like this? The fits are bad enough, but when they are over, they're over, and if I can get to lead a little more tranquil life, I dare say they will not trouble me so much."

"That is quite right, my dear Mr Gartram ; but you must see that this is a growing habit."

"Don't lecture, doctor ; prescribe. I vow here, if you do not, I shall get the stuff from some London chemist, and prescribe for myself."

"My dear sir ! For heaven's sake don't do that !"

"There, you see I have the whip hand of you. You're afraid of losing your patient, eh?"

"I should be so sorry to see you do anything reckless, Mr Gartram, that I will act as you wish. Unwillingly, mind, and only under a promise that you will be very careful, and take the medicine with great discretion."

"Oh, yes, I'll promise anything; only give me rest at night."

"Very well."

"That's right. Now then, what do you think of the bamboozler?" cried Gartram, laughing, as he pointed to what looked like a fountain of verdure springing out of a moist, warm, well-sheltered part of the garden.

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the other. "Quite a tropic plant."

"Yes. Too graceful to give it only a glance. Here, light a cigar and let's take time to contemplate its beauties—and growth," he added, with a dry laugh. "There's no hurry, eh?"

"Well, I have another patient to see; but—"

"He can wait a little longer, eh? What do you say to a seat and a light? There, now, we can contemplate the beauties of

nature all a-growing and all a-blowing," he added, after sending out a great puff of smoke. — "By the way, recollect you dine with us to-night," said Gartram, after about half-an-hour's conversation.

"To-night?" said the doctor, hesitating.

"Yes. No nonsense; and you can bring me a fresh bottle in your pocket. Now, I think we may as well join them indoors, eh?"

The doctor rose and walked with his host to the study window, where Gartram ground out an oath between his teeth.

"You miserable, stupid little jade!" he muttered; "couldn't you see that you were not wanted here?"

Mary's eyelids drooped.

"Oh, yes, uncle dear," she said to herself. "I understand your funny little ways, but I'm not going. Of course, I knew that I was not wanted by one, but I was by the other, and as the other was poor Claude, why, I had the letters done in five minutes, and I've been here ever since."

"Why didn't you write those letters, Mary?" said the old man fiercely.

“ I did write, dear, and there they are on your table, ready for you to read over. Would you like to do it now ? ”

“ No,” said Gartram, in his harshest voice. “ Going, Glyddyr ? ” he continued, as the latter rose.

“ Yes ; I’ll walk back with Doctor Asher.”

“ Ah, well, we shall see you this evening. —Don’t forget, doctor.”

He walked to the drawbridge with them, leaving Mary and Claude alone.

“ There, Claudie ; if any one tells you that you haven’t got a good little cousin, even if she is a bad shape—”

“ Mary, darling ! ” cried Claude, clinging to her, “ I can’t thank you enough. I felt that I must rush away out of the room, and should have done so if you had not come.”

“ Was he so very dreadful, Claudie ? ”

“ Dreadful ! It was horrible. Oh, Mary, darling, pray that you may never have to listen to a man who loves you.”

“ When you love somebody else, you mean ? ”

“ Oh, yes, yes, yes,” cried Claude excitedly.

“ Poor darling coz,” said Mary affection-

ately ; “ but I need not pray, dear. There’s no need. No man will ever sit down by me and take my hand and tell me he loves me. I shall be spared all that.”

“ And now I’ve wounded you with my thoughtless speech, Mary, dear. Ah, my darling, if you only would not think of your appearance ; I never do.”

“ No, dear, you are beautiful.”

“ Beautiful, Mary ? Ah ! how gladly I’d change places with you.”

“ What ? Young, pretty, rich, and with two lovers dying for you.” •

“ It is not true,” cried Claude, flushing up. “ This man loves me for the money, and—”

She stopped short.

“ Shall I finish ? ” said Mary maliciously ; “ and that man loves me for myself.”

“ No,” said Claude sadly. “ If he had loved me as he said, he would not have let himself be driven away from me so easily as he has.”

“ Hist ! uncle,” whispered Mary, as a heavy step was heard on the granite slabs without, and Gartram entered, scowling.

“ Mary,” he cried harshly, “ I thought you

had some brains in your head, but you are no better than a fool."

"I'm very sorry, uncle," said the poor girl humbly.

"There, be off, both of you ; I have some letters to write. See that the dinner is good, Claude, my dear, and—yes," he added, as he referred to his watch, "send that woman with my medicine ; it is just time."

As he spoke, there was a tap on the panel, and Sarah Woodham, looking dark and stern in her black widow's dress, entered with a glass and phial.

"Your medicine, sir," she said in a low, impressive voice.

"Well, hang it all, woman, don't speak as if you had come to poison me," said the old man fiercely.

Sarah Woodham's lips seemed to whiten, and as she drew the squeaking cork from the bottle and poured out the mixture, the neck tapped softly against the edge of the glass.

## CHAPTER VII.

### FOR MONEY'S SAKE.

“YES, fine old man,” said the doctor, as he and Glyddyr walked down the well-paved path together. “Good for any number of years.”

“In spite of the fits?”

“Oh, yes, my dear sir, in spite of the fits. They will not hurt him. Come on after any fresh excitement, and prostrate him a bit afterward, but there’s nothing much to mind.”

“But his sleeplessness? He complains a good deal of that.”

“Hum! Well, yes, that is a bad symptom. But he has his cure in his hands. He will worry himself about money, always striving to make more, when I’ll be bound to say he already has plenty.”

“So report says, doctor.”

“Oh, yes, and I daresay it’s true enough, but that’s nothing to us. If he will only leave off worrying about the increase, he’ll be able

to sleep well enough. But you said you would like a word with me."

"Yes. Nothing much the matter, but I think I do want setting up a little."

"Come into my consulting-room, and we'll see," said Asher, leading the way through a dainty-looking hall, full of the tasteful collections of a man who had evidently an eye for beauty, and had turned his home into quite a little museum.

"Why, doctor," cried Glyddyr, in astonishment, "I didn't know you had this sort of taste?"

"Indeed? Oh, yes. Regular lover of bric-a-brac, as far as my income will allow. This way."

The next minute he had his new patient seated in a consulting-room that was the very opposite of the mausoleum-like abode of gloom into which a London physician has his patients shown.

"Take that seat, my dear sir. Don't be alarmed; it is not an operating chair. A man who has to exist in this out-of-the-way part of the world need have some tastes. Hum, ha!

pulse, tongue, heart, lungs. Look here, my dear Mr Glyddyr, I am very glad you have called upon me, or rather called in my services."

"What?" said Glyddyr anxiously. "You find something wrong?"

"Nothing at all, my dear sir. Just the sort of patient I like. Sound as a roach; wants a dose now and then, and can afford to pay me my fees."

"Come, you are frank," said Glyddyr.

"Most commendable quality in a doctor, sir. You have not been living quite so regularly lately as you should. You have some anxiety on your mind, and it has upset your digestion. Then, feeling a bit low, I should say you had been drinking some bad champagne instead of an honest drop of good Scotch whisky. That's all."

"I say, doctor, are you a necromancer or a magician?"

"Bit of both, my dear sir. Here, I'll begin and give you a dose at once."

"No, hang it all, doctor, not quite so soon," said Glyddyr, glancing at the shelves with their large array of bottles.

“Stitch in time saves nine, sir,” said the doctor, taking out his keys, opening a closet of quaint old carved oak, and bringing forth tumblers, a seltzogene, and a large, curiously-cut decanter. “There, take one-third of that to two-thirds of the carbonic water, and one of these,” he continued, handing a cigar box.

“Oh, come!” said Glyddyr, laughing. “Doctor Asher, if you’ll come to town I’ll guarantee you a fortune.”

“Thank you, said the doctor, helping himself mechanically to that which he had prescribed; and as soon as he had lit his cigar, throwing himself back in another chair. “But no, my lot seems cast here, and I don’t think I shall change. Drop of good whisky, that?”

“Delicious; but is this all the medicine I’m to have?”

“No, I’ll send you a box of pills. Take a couple now and then, and leave the champagne alone.”

“I beg pardon, sir, you are wanted at the hotel,” said the servant, after a tap at the door, from behind which she spoke without attempting to enter.

“Yes : directly.”

Glyddyr took a good sip of his whisky and water, and was in the act of rising when the doctor promptly clapped his hands on his shoulders, and pressed him back.

“No, no, my dear sir, sit still. I don’t suppose I shall be many minutes. I have a patient there who thinks he is very bad. I want to finish my cigar with you.”

He hurried out, leaving Glyddyr leaning back smoking ; but, as soon as he was alone, he sat up and his eyes began to search the three rows of bottles before him, and to read the Latin inscriptions upon the drawers beneath, one of which was pulled half out.

He sat forward listening intently to the retreating step of the doctor, after which all was still as death, save the regular beat of a time-piece on the mantelpiece.

Then he threw himself back frowning, and took out his handkerchief to wipe the perspiration from his forehead, though the room was perfectly cool, and the window open.

“It’s madness,” he muttered ; “impossible !”

He stretched out his hand, seized his glass.

and gulped its contents down quickly, then, taking the decanter, poured out some more and drank that.

“Dutch courage,” he muttered, setting down the glass. “No spirit. But it’s impossible,” he said again, and he laid down his cigar, listening intently.

And yet it seemed so easy, for there before him, in the upper row, with its black letters on a gold ground, was the bottle that would do the work.

“No, no,” he said, in a husky whisper ; but he rose all the same, and stood listening in the midst of a silence that seemed deathlike.

“I should hear his step a minute before he could get here,” he thought ; and with the mocking face of Gellow before him, and his threat, he strode across the room, looked sharply about him, and saw that in the half-opened drawer there were a number of clean phials, each with a cork fitted loosely in.

Taking one of these quickly, he drew the cork with his teeth. Then, raising his hand, he was in the act of taking down the bottle upon which he had fixed his eye, when,—

*Paugh !*

A hoarse, braying, trumpet-like sound of stentorian power, and he started away as if he had received a blow.

“Only a confounded steam tug,” he muttered, with his face glistening with perspiration ; and taking down the bottle he removed the stopper, half filled the phial, replaced the stopper and bottle, safely corked the phial, and, trembling violently now, placed the stolen liquid in his breast, just as he heard a step outside.

Quick as his trembling hands would allow him to act, he struck a light, re-lit his cigar, and sank back in his chair with a sigh of relief as the steps came nearer and nearer ; still he suffered an agony of apprehension lest the doctor on his entrance should notice his agitation.

“ So easy to plan and act,” thought Glyddyr, as he listened, “ but so hard to retain one’s nerve.”

Another five minutes would have enabled him to recover himself, but the steps were already at the door ; and as he drew in a long breath and lay back, closing his eyes, his cigar between his fingers hanging over the arm of his

chair, and his head on one side in a very bad imitation of one asleep, the steps passed on.

A false alarm.

Glyddyr breathed more freely. He had time to glance round and see that he had done nothing to betray himself; the bottle was replaced, he had spilled nothing, and the phial was safe in his pocket.

He sank back again with a sigh, the cold perspiration ceased to ooze from his temples, and his pulse throbbed with less violence, as he smoked slowly, beginning now to look ahead as he felt the little phial.

He had his plan about ready as the step for which he listened was now heard approaching, and directly after the doctor entered the room.

“Five hundred apologies, Mr Glyddyr. You see what a slave a doctor is—everybody’s slave. No matter where he is or how he feels, if somebody has an ache or a pain, the doctor must go—yes, even,” he added bitterly, “if it is to face death in the form of some deadly fever; and generally, in addition to his pay, he hears that he is not clever because he could not perform impossibilities.”

"Not an enviable life, doctor."

"Disgusting, sir, at times. Bah ! what am I talking about ? Don't smoke that cigar ; take another. No ? Going ?"

"Yes ; I'll get on board the yacht," said Glyddyr. "I feel all the better for your prescription."

"That's right. Well, I shall see you again this evening."

"And I am not to touch any of the old man's champagne, eh ?"

"We—ell," said the doctor, with a quaint, smile, "Gartram's wine is sure to be good, and a glass or two will not do you much harm. An exceptional case, my dear sir. A glass or two will brighten you, and put you in good key for conversation with the ladies."

He smiled, and shook hands warmly with his new patient.

"Don't throw me over by-and-by, Mr Glyddyr," he said. "I have been the family doctor for some time now. There, forgive me. Very indiscreet remark of mine."

"Nothing to forgive, my dear sir. Till this evening, then."

“Till this evening,” said the doctor ; and Glyddyr went down towards the harbour, with the doctor standing at the window watching him.

“Lucky fellow,” he said ; “the old man favours it, and the girl—well, girls have to give way.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AFTER DINNER.

“WHAT! you again, Woodham?”

“Yes, sir,” said the woman, in her quiet, grave way. “The time soon passes. Every three hours.”

“Humph! six o’clock,” said Gartram, looking at her uneasily, as she shook up the bottle and poured out the accustomed dose.

“Bah! Filthy! Sugar.”

There was a lump laid on the little tray, and the big strong man took it as hurriedly as a schoolboy.

“Shall I bring the medicine here at nine, sir?”

“No; those gentlemen will be here smoking, perhaps. Put the next dose in the glass, and leave it on the chimney-piece. I’ll take it when I come in.”

“I beg your pardon, sir; but will you remember it?”

"Of course ; if I don't, you can remind me. I don't want to have to be taking stuff before visitors, do I ?"

Sarah Woodham shook up the medicine, poured out another glassful, placed it on the mantelpiece as directed, and left the room.

Half-an-hour later, the doctor and Glyddyr arrived together, and were received by Claude, Gartram not being quite dressed.

Five minutes later he came down and hurried into the study, taking out his key as he crossed the room.

"Hallo, little lady," he said sharply, as he found Mary standing by the fireplace with a wine glass in her hand ; "what are you doing here ?"

"I was only looking round, uncle," she said quickly, "to see that everything was left straight. You'll have the coffee brought in here, I suppose, after dinner ?"

"Yes, of course," he said rashly ; "but you ought to be in the drawing-room. What are you doing with that glass ?"

"It is a dirty one, uncle," said the girl, in a hurried manner ; "I was going to take it away."

"You please to put it back, and don't meddle with things in my room."

"I'm very sorry, uncle dear," she said; and replacing the glass quickly, she hurried out of the room.

"I mustn't forget that," said Gartram, as he opened the cabinet in which he kept his cigars, and then joined his guests in the drawing-room.

Five minutes after, dinner was announced, and Glyddyr took in Claude, who trembled as she felt what a quiet, respectful manner he had adopted, and how it seemed to indicate a feeling of satisfied assurance that, sooner or later, she would be his.

It was impossible to be quite calm under the circumstances; but she strove hard to keep away all such thoughts, and, in her quality of mistress of the house, did the honours of the table admirably, till it was time to rise and leave the gentlemen to their wine.

"We sha'n't sit very long, Claude," said Gartram; "and after a cigar, we shall want some music."

"Yes, papa," said Claude gravely; and she moved toward the door, which Glyddyr had hurried to open, fixing his eyes upon her in a dreamy, pleading way as she went out, and making her catch Mary's arm nervously as soon as they were alone.

"Mary, dear," she said excitedly, "if it were not for papa's health, I should run away to aunt's, and stay there. This man seems so persistent, and his quiet way thoroughly frightens me."

"Sapping and mining, instead of bold assault," said Mary.

"Shall I ever be such a coward as to consent?"

"Bah! How do we know what may not happen long before it is time to be obliged to say 'yes.'"

"Nothing seems likely to happen to set aside my father's wishes," sighed Claude.

"Ah, you don't know. It is the unexpected which they say always happens. So we are to sing to-night?"

"Yes. Is anything the matter with you, Mary, dear?"

“With me?” was the reply, with a forced laugh. “How absurd, dear. No, of course not; nothing. Why, Claude, you are making your great eyes look goggles. You don’t think I have done anything, do you?”

“I don’t think you can be well, Mary, dear,” said Claude, taking her hand and kissing her brow; “why, your hands are cold and your forehead quite hot.”

“Of course they are. Haven’t we just had dinner?”

Claude looked at her wearily, but her cousin laughed in a quick, excited way, and crossed to the canterbury to begin turning over the music.

“They’ll soon be here now,” she said.

But there did not seem to be much prospect of the gentlemen coming, for in a very few minutes after they were left alone, Gartram passed on the claret jug.

“Wine, gentlemen,” he said. “Asher, you would prefer a glass of old port?”

“Indeed, no, my dear sir; nothing more for me. I have to ask you to excuse me soon.”

“What!” cried Gartram.

“For about half-an-hour. A patient.”

“What a nuisance !” said Gartram. “Must you go ?”

“Without fail.”

“Then come in the study and have a cup of coffee and a cigar first.”

“To be sure. I am with you there.”

Gartram threw open the door ; they crossed the hall and entered the study, where a shaded lamp was burning, the window wide open, and the soft subdued light of the moon, as it rose slowly over the glistening sea, flooded the room.

“What a glorious night !” said the doctor, as he went to the table, filled a cup with coffee, and then took a cigar and cut off the end before looking round, and then walking to the chimney-piece, while Glyddyr threw himself in a chair and began to help himself.

“Give me a cup too, my dear boy,” said Gartram, as he took a cigar. “Doctor does not cut down my smoking yet. No matches ?”

“All right ; here they are on the chimney-piece,” said the doctor, and as he spoke the flame of the little wax match gave his face a

peculiar aspect in the dim room. "But, hallo! What have we here? Secret drinking. What is this?" and, as he spoke, he took up a glass standing on the chimney-piece.

"Secret drinking, indeed!" grunted Gartram. "It's your confounded tonic, put there ready for me to take by-and-by."

"A thousand pardons," said the doctor, coming forward and taking up his coffee, while Glyddyr lay back in an easy-chair, gazing at the dimly-seen glass upon the mantelpiece, and smoking thoughtfully.

"You've no light, Glyddyr," said Gartram, rising and going to the chimney-piece, where, with his back to his guests, he took up the wine glass, but uttered an impatient ejaculation, set it down again, and took up the match stand, which he placed beside Glyddyr, and then tossed off his coffee. "What do you say to finishing our smoking out on the terrace?"

"To be sure; yes," said the doctor. "A most glorious night."

He moved with his host toward the open French window, where the two men stood for a few moments darkening the room, and look-

ing like two huge silhouettes to Glyddyr, as he lay back in his chair with his cigar half out.

Then suddenly Gartram turned and looked at him with a peculiar smile.

“You won’t join us, I suppose?” he said.

“I—thanks—if you will excuse me,” said Glyddyr, in a faltering voice.

“Excuse you, my dear boy? of course. Come along, Asher, the sea looks lovely from the upper seat.”

Glyddyr’s whole manner changed, and grew cat-like in its quick, soft movements as the pair walked away from the window along the granite terrace, Gartram’s boots creaking loudly as they walked.

There was a death-like silence then in the room, which made Glyddyr’s long-drawn, catching breath sound strangely loud as he rose from his seat and walked silently over the thick carpet to stand listening by the window, his figure in turn looking perfectly black against the moonlight; and as he stood there, from outside there came the low murmur of the men’s voices, and from the house, all muffled, the music of the piano in the drawing-room.

With a quick, gliding movement Glyddyr walked to the chimney-piece, thrusting his hand into his breast-pocket. Then, taking up the glass, he crossed to the window, and with a quick movement threw its contents sharply away, the liquid breaking up into a tiny sparkling shower in the soft yellow moonlight, and then it was gone.

Quickly and silently Glyddyr stole back to the chimney-piece, and replaced the glass. There was a faint, squeaking noise, as of a cork being removed from a phial, then the tap of glass upon glass, a faint gurgling, and another tapping of glass upon glass, as if his hand trembled.

A low, catching sigh followed, then a repetition of the faint squeak of the cork, and Glyddyr once more moved towards the window, satisfied himself that the others were nowhere near, and then he drew back a little, extended his arm behind him, and hurled the little phial away with all his might.

There was the quick rustle and jerk of clothes, then silence; then a faint sound, and Glyddyr drew a long breath, as if of satisfac-

tion as he felt that all had gone as he wished, and the bottle had shivered to atoms on the rocks far below, while the next tide would cover the fragments, and wash them into crevices among the granite boulders as it destroyed all trace of the contents.

Glyddyr stood thinking for a few moments, and then he gulped down his coffee, and went out into the hall, which he crossed, hesitated again for a few minutes, and then entered the drawing-room, where, as the door closed, a low fresh murmuring arose, and was succeeded a minute later by the sound of the piano and Claude's voice, which came sweet and pure to the hall, as a *portière* was drawn aside, and the dark figure of Sarah Woodham came forward into the light.

She stood listening by the drawing-room door for a few minutes, and then her dress rustled softly as she went across to the study, listened, tapped lightly, turned the handle and entered, closing the door after her.

The murmur of voices came from the terrace, and the woman replaced the coffee cups on the silver tray, and was in the act of lifting it,

gazing out through the open window the while, but she set the tray down again, walked to the window, listened, and then went quickly to the chimney-piece. Then there was an ejaculation that was almost a moan as she raised the glass, and then, after listening intently, she held it up to the light, uttered a piteous sigh, and crossing quickly to the tray, emptied the contents into one of the fresh-used coffee-cups, and replaced the glass on the chimney-piece. Then once more there was the faint squeaking of a cork in a bottle neck, the low gurgling of fluid being poured out, the replacing of the cork; and as the woman glided to the table, where the coffee tray remained, the light of the moon shone upon her dark dress and white apron, and showed her hurried movements as she thrust a bottle into the pocket among the folds of her dress.

A low sigh once more escaped her lips, and she muttered softly as she took up the tray and left the room.

“Not more than half an hour,” said a voice, which echoed from the terrace wall, and there were approaching steps.

"Make all the haste you can. I'll have my nap while you are gone. I say, doctor."

"Yes," said Asher, pausing in the moonlight by the open window.

"Don't disturb them in the drawing-room."

"No, no, I understand," said the doctor; and he stepped softly into the room, smiling as he went to the table, helped himself to a cigar, bit off and spat out the end, then took up the match stand, struck a light, and walked slowly across the room as he lit his cigar, stopping for a few moments puffing heavily to get it well alight before he set down the matches in their old place.

Five minutes after, Gartram's creaking boots were heard as he came along the terrace, entered the room, went straight to the chimney-piece, tossed off the contents of the glass, and then threw himself in an easy-chair.

"There, Master Glyddyr," he said; "you have the field to yourself, and you will not mind my having a nap."

Claude played well, and after a little entreaty she sang an old ballad, in a sweet low voice that would have thrilled some men, but

to which Glyddyr listened in an abstracted way, as if his attention was more taken up by what was going on without.

After a time the urn was brought in, and Claude was about to rise from the piano, but Glyddyr seemed to become all at once deeply interested, and begged so very earnestly that she stayed, a duet was produced, and Mary Dillon, directly after the prelude, took the first part in a voice so clear and piercing, so bird-like in its purity and strength, that for a few moments the visitor sat gazing at her in admiration.

But he soon became abstracted again, and as the final notes of the combined voices rang out, he rose with a sigh, and walked to the window, while Claude proceeded to make the tea.

"And never said 'thank you,'" whispered Mary. "Poor young man. He is terribly in love."

At that moment steps were heard passing down the stone pathway toward the gate.

"Doctor Asher gone to give some poor creature physic," said Mary merrily; and Glyddyr came slowly back toward the table.

"You will take some tea, Mr Glyddyr?" said Claude.

"I? No, thanks; I rarely take it," he replied. "I'm afraid I am rather a burden upon you two ladies, and if you will excuse me I will go and have a chat with Mr Gartram, as he is alone."

"I am afraid you will not find papa very conversational," said Claude gravely. "He will be having his after-dinner nap."

"Ah, well, I shall not disturb him. I will go and have a cigar."

He left the room in a hurried way, and as soon as the door was closed, Mary burst into a merry fit of laughter.

"Mary!"

"Well, I can't help it, Claude," she said. "Oh, how grateful you ought to be to me. I have saved you from no end of love-making. Did you see how wistfully he kept on looking at us?"

"No," said Claude, with a sigh of relief.

"But he did, dear. Talk about the language of the eye; you could read his without a dictionary. It was, 'Do go, my dear Miss

Mary. I do want a *tête-à-tête* with Claude so very, very badly.’”

“Pray be silent, Mary.”

“Yes, dear, directly. Mute as a fish ; but it was such fun to watch his pleading looks and refuse silently all his prayers—for your sake, darling. Remember that.”

“You are always good to me, Mary.”

“You don’t half know, my dear. Then, after a time, a change came over the man, and he grew cross. I could see him growling mentally, and calling me names for a little crook-backed female Richard the Third, and once I thought he was going to kick me out of the door, or throw me out of the window, for being such an idiot as to stay.”

“Mary, what nonsense you do talk.”

“It is not nonsense, dear. Uncle kept the doctor out in the garden, so that Mr Glyddyr could come and have a sweet little chat with you ; and I ought to have left the room, of course, but, to oblige you, I sat here like an ice, and kept the enemy at a distance. Oh, how he must hate me !”

“Mary, dear, pray be serious.”

"Oh, yes, I'll be serious enough, dear. There, I am solidity itself; I could not be better, I'm sure, when the enemy approaches," she whispered, as steps were once more heard crossing the hall.

"Shall I go, dear? Perhaps I had better now."

She rose from her seat and set down her cup, but Claude laid her hand upon the thin little arm, and motioned towards a chair.

The door opened, and Glyddyr re-entered.

"I beg your pardon," he said; and the matter-of-fact man of the world seemed to have quite lost his ordinary *aplomb*, and came on in a quiet, hesitating way.

"I'm afraid I was very rude leaving you like that," he said; "and I did not thank you for the duet."

"We needed no thanks, Mr Glyddyr," said Claude gravely.

"No, no, of course not," he said. "I meant to thank you. Mr Gartram is asleep, and if you will not think me rude, I will go and sit in the study and smoke a cigar."

"Pray do, Mr Glyddyr," said Claude; and he once more left the room.

“Well, I couldn’t have believed it, Claudie. The lion completely tamed by love. Why, my poor darling, you’ve turned him from a sarcastic, sharp-tongued, clever London society man to a weak, hesitating lover.”

“For goodness’ sake, don’t talk like that. Mary,” cried Claude ; for the picture her cousin painted seemed to her terrible. She literally shuddered at the idea of this man really loving her, and sat looking aghast before her, while Glyddyr went slowly back, so excited that the perspiration oozed from his brow, and made him unconsciously take out his pocket handkerchief to wipe the palms of his hands.

Upon the first occasion he had strung himself up and walked quickly to the study determined to carry out his plans.

“It will only be a loan,” he told himself ; “only borrowing what is to be my own some day, and he would never miss it.”

Closing the door behind him, and merely glancing at the easy-chair in which Gartram lay back, with his face in the shade, and his white shirt-front standing out of the gloom like some peculiar creature, Glyddyr walked

to the mantelpiece, looked at the glass; then crossed to the table, and began picking and choosing from the cigars in the box, as in a furtive way he listened to his host's slow, heavy breathing, and wondered whether he was sufficiently sound for him to attempt to get his keys.

The breathing came very regularly, and at last, after hesitating a great deal on the selection of a cigar, he said aloud,—

“Where do you get your cigars, Mr Gartram?”

No reply; only the heavy breathing.

“I said where did you get your cigars?” said Glyddyr, still more loudly.

“He must be safe,” he thought to himself; and to make sure he walked carelessly to the side of the chair, and gazed full in Gartram's face.

“He would have winced if there had been any pretence,” he thought. And then, “Pooh! what a fool I am.”

He glanced at the table in whose drawer the keys reposed, looked at the great section of the bookcase which swung round as upon a pivot,

and then he walked quickly to the window and looked out right and left, listening the while to the beating of the waves upon the rocky coast far below.

“While I am hesitating,” he thought, “I might do it. The doctor can’t be back yet, and no one is likely to come.”

There was a step outside.

He took a couple of strides, and then sharply threw himself into an easy-chair near the book-case, and lay back in almost profound darkness, for the rays of the moon cut right across from the window, bathing the carpet with a soft light, but leaving beyond the well-defined line a deep shadow.

He had hardly taken his place when there was a faint tap at the panel of the door, the handle turned, and, silent and ghastly-looking in the gloom, Sarah Woodham came into the room, closed the door behind her, and walked across to Gartram’s chair.

## CHAPTER IX.

### AN UNPLEASANT POSITION.

“It’s enough to drive a man mad,” said Chris Lisle, as he sat in his room with a book in his hand, one which he had been vainly trying to read. “To think of him having the run of the Fort, and constant opportunities of being at her side. But I will not think about it.”

He settled himself back in his chair, raised the open book once more to his eyes, uttered a mocking laugh at his own expense, and threw the volume passionately across the room, for he had realised that he had been sitting there for a full hour making pretence of reading with the book upside down.

“I could not have believed that I was such a fool,” he growled fiercely; “but always with her!” he added softly, as the wearing, tormenting thought uppermost in his brain asserted itself.

“Women are naturally weak, and it is

Gartram's wish. How could I be surprised if she yielded? No, she would not; she is too firm, and I am a contemptible brute to want faith in her."

He felt a little better after that, roundly taking himself to task; and it was like a mental stimulus; but, like the action of most stimulants, the effect was not lasting.

"It is not as if she had confessed her love for me, and promised to be my wife some day. If she had pledged herself to me, I would not have cared, but I have nothing to hold on by; and if she obeyed her father's wishes, what right have I to complain? Oh, it will drive me mad!" he muttered, as he leaped up and paced the room.

At that moment there was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" roared Chris, as impatiently as if he had answered half-a-dozen times.

"It's only me, Mr Lisle," said his landlady, "and I'm sure I beg your pardon for coming in; but it does worry me so to hear you walking up and down so in such agony. Now do be advised by me, sir; I'm getting on in years, and I've had some experience of such things."

“Oh, yes, yes, Mrs Sarson ; but, pray, don’t bother me now.”

“Indeed, no, sir, I won’t ; but though I can’t help admiring the fortitude you show, it is more than I can bear to sit in my little room and hear you walking up and down in such pain. Now mark my word, Mr Lisle, sir, it’s *not* toothache.”

“No, no,” he said impatiently ; “it is not toothache.”

“No, sir. Which well I know. It’s what the doctors call newrallergeer.”

“My dear Mrs Sarson—”

“No, no, my dear, don’t be cross with a poor woman whose only idea is to try and do you good. No one knows what it is better than I do. I’ve had your gnawing toothache, which is bad enough for anything ; but your jig, jiggling newrallergeer is ten times worse, and it makes me pity you, Mr Lisle.”

“Yes, thank you, Mrs Sarson, I am greatly obliged to you, but—”

“Take my word for it, sir, ’tis your stomach, and you won’t be no better till you’ve had a tonic.”

"Nonsense, nonsense, Mrs Sarson," cried Chris impatiently.

"No, sir, it is not nonsense, and I don't a bit mind you being impatient with me, for it's quite natural; but do let me ask Doctor Asher to call in."

"No, no, no," cried Chris, with increasing loudness and emphasis. "And now, pray, go and leave me to myself."

The landlady sighed, and slowly left the room.

"This woman will send me crazy," muttered Chris. "What shall I do? Go right away for a long trip, and try and forget it all." And he went and leaned against the side of the window and looked out over the sea, thinking only of Claude seated alone with Glyddyr, listening to his words, and that, as the stone yields before the constant dropping, so would she at last.

"I must see, and will see her, and get her promise," he said at last excitedly; and, taking his hat, he strode out of the cottage and went right out up the east glen with the intention of getting away round over the high

ground by the cliffs, and continuing under the shelter of the night to go up to the Fort by the back, so as to get within the garden, and perhaps manage to call either Claude's or Mary's attention by creeping round to the drawing-room window.

It was a miserable, clandestine proceeding, and he felt all the nervous trepidation of a boy on his way to rob an orchard. Two or three times over he hesitated and turned to go back; but the next moment the sweet, pleading face of Claude seemed to appear before him, and that of Glyddyr mocking and triumphant.

"I can't help it," he cried. "I must, I will see her to-night, if it's only for a minute."

It was not so easy a task as he had told himself; and, as he descended the cliff towards where, on a separate little eminence cut off from the main cliff by a deep rift, the Fort stood, he noted for the first time that it was bathed in the soft yellow moonlight which rose above the sea.

This checked him for the moment, till it occurred to him that though the moon shone

brightly in parts, there were plenty of spots where he could approach the place in the deep shadows ; and taking advantage of the clumps of furze, and the ragged, stunted pines, which had obtained a foothold for their precarious existence here and there, he crept on and on, selecting the narrow little gully for his course, down which gurgled the tiny spring which supplied the moat with water.

"It's easy enough," muttered Chris, as he lowered himself down here, clung to a rock there, and managed all the time to keep in the shadow till he was at the end of the gully, where it opened on the moat, beyond which, and about fifty yards away, rose the fantastic, granite-built home of the woman he loved.

There was the moat to cross, and, beyond, the massive wall, beyond which again was the well-planted garden, with its southern wall covered with well-trained fruit trees.

It was for this part of the garden that Chris Lisle aimed, with every step of the way bringing up old remembrances of boy and girl life, and the hours he had spent in the grounds with Claude.

“And will again,” he muttered. “I am not a beggar now.”

After a glance or two at the back of the house, which he was facing, he took hold of one of the pendant boughs overhanging the moat, stepped to the very edge, and then lowered himself into the water.

It was deeper than he had anticipated, rising at once to his middle, and he paused for a moment, wondering whether he should have to swim ; but fortunately, as he advanced, the depth was only increased by a few inches, and in a few seconds he had waded across, and was half dragging himself up by the ivy, half climbing to the foot of the wall, where, without thinking of what he was doing, he stood for a time to drain, the clear stream water trickling down, and forming a pool beneath the ivy at his feet.

All seemed still, and he crept through the abundant ivy to where a huge, massive buttress sloped down from the top of the wall to the rock, where the architect had studied the strength of his work as regarded the attacks of time, and not those of men who had designs

upon the wealth Gartram would not trust in the banks. This buttress, when first built, might have been climbed by an active boy, while now, it was so densely coated with the ivy of many years' growth that Chris had no difficulty in making his way to the top of the wall, where he lay down for a few moments to reconnoitre, and, finding all still, he had only to make use of the trunk of a pear-tree, whose horizontally trained bows were as easy to descend as a ladder.

He felt perfectly determined, but, all the same, a sensation of shame, mingled with dread, assailed him as he thought of how contemptible a figure he would cut if he were discovered.

That was but a momentary thought, chased away by the recollection that he was once more within the walls which held the woman he loved ; and, perfectly familiar with every foot of the ground, he soon crossed the rather open part devoted to fruit-growing, and made his way to the shrubs surrounding the upper and lower lawns.

Here there were plenty of shadowy spots, among which he crept till he was brought to a

standstill by the sound of steps coming along the terrace walk, and he recognised the voices at once as those of Gartram and Doctor Asher.

The hot blood flushed the young man's face for two reasons.

If he stayed there, he would be forced to play the eavesdropper; and for the second reason, Gartram and the doctor being together, it, in all probability, meant that Glyddyr had been left alone with Claude.

At the risk of being heard, he drew back among the bushes, and crept slowly away, the voices seeming to follow him as he made from the side to the back of the house, and then in and out among the trees till he was right on the other side, where a light shone out from the drawing-room windows, and where, by a little manœuvring, he was able to look in.

His heart beat faster as he caught sight of a black coat and the bright dress of Claude. It was just as he thought; and, unable to contain himself, he was about to cross the narrow patch of lawn, and make straight for the room, when a female figure passed the window, and he recognised Mary Dillon.

He drew a catching breath, full of relief, and remained in the shade.

Thank heaven ! they were not alone.

Still, there seemed to be no opportunity for a word with Claude, and to have done what he felt he would like to do—go boldly in and speak to her—would only mean a scene with her father, and pain to her. There was nothing for it but to wait, and he remained there hidden, with his eyes fixed upon the window, and seeing, if he could not hear, much that was going on.

He heard, though, the doctor's step, and knew when he left, his heart beating fast as he saw Glyddyr leave the room.

This was his opportunity, and he cautiously approached the window, meaning to risk all, and tap upon the pane, but before he put his plan into effect the door re-opened, and Glyddyr returned, sending Chris back among the bushes, where, unable to bear the sight of his rival in Claude's presence, playing the part of the accepted lover, he stole off, intending to make his way round to the other side of the house, hoping that Gartram might be by this

time following out a custom perfectly familiar to Chris, and having his after-dinner nap.

By means of a little scheming he contrived to get down among the bushes below the terrace in front of the study, but it was no easy task, for the cliff, in whose interstices the bushes were placed, sloped rapidly down here, and a false step or slip would have meant a fall of fifty or sixty feet.

Accustomed to rough climbing, though, as he was, he did not hesitate, and raising himself up till he could look over the edge, he was in time to see the study door open, and Sarah Woodham enter the room.

It was a little disappointing, for at the first glimpse of the woman's dress he thought it was Claude; and, in utter ignorance of the fact that his opportunity had come, and that the ladies were now alone in the drawing-room, he remained watching for a time, and then crept slowly back, wishing that he had had the foresight to bring a note, for, had he borne one, he could easily have contrived to send it, with a pebble inside, through Claude's open window.

Low spirited and despondent, ready to take himself to task for coming upon so mad an expedition, he made his way cautiously back towards the garden, hesitating still as to whether he should go away, or wait about on the chance of getting a word with Claude. Common sense and manly pride advocated the return, but there was the natural desire to see the woman he loved, even if he were playing the part of a spy; and with a sigh he crept from bush to bush, keeping well in the shadow, till once more he was within range of the drawing-room window, and in the act of parting two boughs to gaze between, when there was a rustling sound, a strong hand held him by the collar, another grasped his wrist, and a deep voice said,—

“I’ve got you, have I? What are you doing here?”

Stung to the quick by shame and annoyance, Chris swung himself back to make a desperate leap and escape—feeling that he had been discovered by Gartram, and like a flash the degradation and bitterness of what was to come seemed to blaze through his brain.

But there is a good old saying : Look before you leap.

Chris Lisle did not look before he leapt, and the consequence was that he went with a crash in among the elastic boughs of a short sturdy Weymouth pine, and was thrown back into his captor's arms.

"Oh, no ; you don't," rang in his ears, as he was borne to the ground, falling back on the grass with his face right out in the moonlight.

"Mr Lisle !"

"You, Brime !" whispered Chris huskily, as the hands were taken from his collar, and he struggled up, to stand facing the gardener.

"Why, sir, if I didn't think it was one of them young dogs from down the harbour after the fruit. They've got a dinner party on, and I come out of the house and ketched sight of you. I beg your pardon, sir, I didn't know you were asked."

"Hush ! Don't talk so loud. No, I was not asked, Brime, but—that is—I thought I'd—I was looking at the drawing-room window."

"I understand, sir. I see, sir ; but how did you manage to get in ?"

"Don't—don't ask me questions, man. I—there, for heaven's sake, hold your tongue. Take this. Get yourself a glass."

"Thankye, sir."

"And don't say you saw me here."

"Oh, dear, no, sir ; certainly not."

"It was a bit of a freak, Brime," continued Chris, feeling his cheeks burn, as he faltered and stumbled in his words, ready to bite out his own tongue at being compelled to lower himself like this to the man, as he was sure to go and chatter to the maids about how he had caught Mr Chris ; and perhaps give Claude the credit of a clandestine meeting.

"Yes, sir ; young gents will have their larks sometimes," said the gardener drily, and mentally adding to himself, "Shabby beggar ! Sixpence ! Bound to say if it had been Mr Glider he'd ha' made it half-a-crown."

"I trust to your discretion, Brime. Can you let me out through the side gate ?"

"Oh, yes, sir ; of course. I've got the key

in my pocket. But don't let me interrupt you, sir, till you've quite done."

"Done! What do you mean?" cried Chris in an angry whisper, as he fancied he detected a sarcastic ring in the man's voice.

"Oh, nothing, sir. I thought perhaps you might be going to see somebody, and I'm in no hurry to go back home."

"No, no; nonsense. I am not going to see anybody," said Chris hurriedly. "Go on first; and look here, Brime, once more I must beg of you not to speak to any one of this meeting. It might cause trouble."

"You may trust me, sir," said the man sturdily.

"Thank you. Of course," said Chris hastily, as the man led the way to a door in the thick wall of the garden, which door he opened, and Chris passed out.

"Who'd ever think as such games as that was being carried on?" muttered the gardener; "and Miss Claude all the while so prim, and looking as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth. If it had been Miss Mary I shouldn't have wondered, for she can be a bit larky."

But he wouldn't come to see her, poor little crooked wench. Now, I wonder what Mr Glider would say if he knowed," continued the gardener, as he thoughtfully turned the key, and went slowly back towards the house. "There'd be a row, and I'll bet a tanner that he'd come down handsome if I told him; and it would serve t'other right—a mean snob. Sixpence! Yah!"

He turned the coin over in his hand, and looked at it in the bright moonlight before putting it in his pocket.

"Sixpence!" he said, half-aloud. "Why, I'd have given a bob myself if it had been me, and—well! That it is! Half-a-suffrin! He's a trump, and I wouldn't let out about it for any money.

"Why, of course!" he continued, "I might have known. So he came to see Miss Claude on the sly when the governor was asleep, and couldn't see her because there's company. Well, why not? He's a good sort, that's what he is, and if I can help him without getting into trouble with the gaffer, I will, and no mistake. Half-a-suffrin!

why, that may be just like a bean as I sticks in the ground. It may come up and have lots more half-suffrins. I'm glad I come up to-night. Better than gardening ever so much, that it is. Now, if I knowed exactly when he was coming next, I might happen to be here again—by accident, of course."

He stopped for a few minutes, thinking, and then walked slowly up towards the back entrance, musing slowly and deeply, as gardeners will muse.

"I don't seem to move her yet much, but I'm not going to give up. Hang me if I didn't for a moment think he might have been after her. But no; he couldn't be. Poor lass! so quiet and serious, and full o' trouble, just the sort o' woman a man could trust to bring all his savings to. Now, I wonder what it is in a widow as leads a chap on so. I don't know, but she's leading me on, and the day as she's been a widow twelve month, sir, I'll speak to her like a man."

Reuben Brime, the biggest fool in Danmouth, according to his mother, opened the back door, and went into the house just at

the same moment that Doctor Asher entered up the front.

Meanwhile, Chris Lisle had walked quickly down the narrow paved stone alley leading to the main path, crossed the lower draw-bridge, and, with his teeth set, felt ready to curse himself for his folly.

"The contemptible, degrading position," he muttered. "To be under the thumb of a servant who will look at me furtively, and whom I shall have to bribe into silence for fear of his confounded tongue. Oh, my darling, forgive me. It was for your sake I came, but I must have been half-mad."

He was walking quickly down the roadway leading to the public cliff path, so intent upon the events of the night that he was right upon some one coming in the other direction before he realised the fact, and they met just in a part where the moon shone clearly.

"Ah, Mr Lisle," said the doctor's cheery voice, "nice evening, isn't it?"

He passed on, and Chris almost staggered and reeled.

“Good heaven!” he groaned to himself. “I can’t ask him, and now he will go and tell them all that he met me coming from the house. What will Claude think. What will Gartram say?”

He went on, trying to find some excuse for his presence in that private roadway, but there was none. Any one coming along there must have been up to the Fort, and he had done a bad night’s work in yielding to his passionate desire to see Claude, and hear from her lips words of encouragement such as would make the situation more bearable—a worse night’s work than he realised for some time to come.

Chris Lisle went straight back to his lodgings, for the glorious night and the glittering sea had no attraction for him now. His landlady looked at him pityingly, and longed to ask him whether he was better, but did not dare.

“Poor young man,” she said to herself, as she heard him go up to bed early; “a good night’s rest is better than balm.”

She was quite right; but Chris Lisle had neither rest nor balm, but lay in his bed all night wakeful, seeing a pale, despicable look-

ing man discovered like a thief in the Fort garden after he had waded the moat and climbed the wall.

“I shall have to meet Gartram and face him, and listen to his sneers and insolent bullying reproaches. Oh, how could I be such a fool?”

Chris Lisle lay awake all night working up his defence, the more strongly that he felt that he now stood more upon an equality with Claude's father; but the slip he had made troubled him sorely.

“There's only one way out of the difficulty,” he said at last, as the sun shone brightly in through his window. “Go up to him, confess what one has done, and boldly and frankly ask him once more to give me a chance.”

There was something so refreshing in that thought, backed as it was by forty thousand pounds, that Chris Lisle turned over and went to sleep.

But it might have been because he was utterly tired out.

## CHAPTER X.

### PARRY GLYDDYR IS UNWELL.

DOCTOR ASHER did not go straight up to the Fort and tell every one that he had seen Chris Lisle coming down from the house. In fact, he hardly gave the meeting a second thought, for his mind was full of other matters.

“Well, young ladies,” he said cheerily, “all alone? I hope I am not too late for a cup of the boon. No? That’s right. Bless the man who first brought tea from China—the deliciously refreshing beverage we drink out of china, eh, Miss Dillon?”

“But you always have it in china, Doctor Asher,” said Mary quaintly.

“No, no, no, no, no,” said the doctor, smiling, as he tapped his cup with his spoon. “I am not going to be inveigled into a chop-logic or punning encounter with you, my dear, because I should be beaten. Come, now, if you

want an argument, step on to my ground and give a poor man a chance. Now, what is your opinion of the effect of a vegetable alkaloid on the digestive function?"

"A very poor one," said Mary quietly. "Can't argue."

"Ah, well, but you can sing. Will you?"

"If you wish me to."

"If I wish you, eh," said the doctor. "You know I do. But where is Mr Glyddyr? Gone."

"He went to smoke in the study," said Claude quietly.

The doctor turned round sharply.

"To burn vegetable alkaloid for his digestive function," said Mary.

At that moment there was a step in the hall, and Glyddyr came in, looking rather sallow.

"Just in time, Mr Glyddyr," said the doctor; "we are going to have a song."

"Indeed?" said Glyddyr. "I am very glad."

"When I marry—that is, if I marry," said the doctor—"What delicious tea. A little too strong. Miss Gartram, would you kindly—a drop of milk—I mean cream. Thanks. What was I saying? Oh! I remember. When I

marry—if I marry—I shall ask a lady who is a clever musician to share my lot. By the way, is Mr Gartram coming?”

“Sound asleep still,” said Glyddyr quickly. “I spoke to him when I finished my cigar, but he didn’t reply.”

“Not well, Mr Glyddyr?” said the doctor, between two sips of his tea.

“Well, really, to be frank,” said Glyddyr hastily, “I don’t think I am quite the thing. That last cigar was of a peculiar brand, I suppose, one I was not accustomed to; and if you will excuse me, Miss Gartram, I will say good-night.”

“Let me prescribe. A cup of strong coffee, or a liqueur of brandy. Miss Gartram, may I ring?”

“I will go and see that they are brought in,” said Mary, leaving the piano, where she was arranging a piece of music.

“No, no; I beg you will not,” said Glyddyr. “I’ll walk down to the harbour in the fresh night air. My men will be waiting. I said ten—they must be there now. Better soon.”

"Mr Gartram does have some strong cigars," said the doctor quietly. "Singular that nicotine from one leaf affects you more than another."

"I am sorry you feel unwell, Mr Glyddyr," said Claude, in the most matter-of-fact tone.

"Mere trifle—nothing. Most absurd in me."

"Pray let me ring for the spirit stand."

"Indeed, no. Good-night — good-night, Miss Dillon. I'm going to be independent of you, Doctor Asher. Good-night."

"Smokes too much, I'm afraid," said the doctor, as the door was closed on Glyddyr's retreating figure. "Seems unnerved. I shall be called upon to prescribe for him, only I'm afraid that you would quarrel with my medicine, Miss Gartram."

"I?" said Claude quickly.

"I am afraid I have been indiscreet. Elderly men will presume upon their years, my dear Miss Gartram, and think that they have a right to banter young ladies. I was only going to say that my prescription would be, go away for a good long sea trip."

"Is not papa sleeping an unusually long

time, Mary ? ” said Claude, ignoring the doctor’s remark, as she proceeded to re-fill his cup.

“ Oh, I don’t know,” replied Mary ; “ I’ll go and see.”

She left the room, and Claude at once turned to the doctor.

“ Do you think papa is acting rightly about the medicine he takes ? ”

Asher raised his eyebrows, and gave his shoulders a slight shrug.

“ It makes me terribly uneasy,” said Claude. “ Of course, I know very little about these matters, but I have naturally learned how the use of narcotics grows upon those who indulge in them ; and papa seems to fly more and more to that chloral.”

The doctor pursed up his lips in the most professional way.

“ Really, my dear young lady,” he said, “ you are, to speak vulgarly, putting me in a corner.”

“ Pray do not trifle with me, doctor. You cannot think how I suffer.”

“ I will be perfectly frank with you, my child. No he is not acting rightly, and the use of this drug is doing him harm.”

“Ah!” ejaculated Claude; and then, with eyes flashing and an indignant look, “How can you let him go on taking it, then?”

“Because I cannot help myself, my dear madam; and as I have before observed, it is better that he should take it under my supervision than left to himself, though even now I am helpless. I prescribe certain quantities, but I cannot prevent his taking more.”

“But why don’t you tell him that it is bad for him?”

“I have done so a score of times.”

“And what does he say?”

“That I am a fool, and am to mind my own business.”

“Oh!” ejaculated Claude, with the troubled look in her face increasing.

“He tells me plainly that if I do not choose to go on attending him as he wishes, he will call in some one else. My dear Miss Gartram, your father is not a man to drive; he always insists on holding the reins himself.”

“But, Doctor Asher, cannot anything be done?”

“I am doing all that is possible, my dear.

I am giving him tonic medicine with the idea of counteracting any evil produced by the sedative dose he takes. If you can suggest a better line to pursue, pray let me hear it."

"No, no," said Claude sadly; "I am very ignorant and helpless. Does he really require this medicine?"

"Yes, and no, my child. He suffers terribly from insomnia, and nothing can be worse for a weary man than to be lying sleepless, night after night. It is a serious complaint."

"Yes," sighed Claude.

"He must have sleep, and to my mind the chloral seems the best thing to get it."

"But you said *yes* and *no*, doctor?"

"I did. Well, then, no. Your father does not require this medicine if he will only change his course of life."

Claude sighed.

"Do you wish me to speak plainly as your friend?"

"Yes; of course."

"Then here is the case. All this insomnia is the consequence of an over-excited brain.

Your father has certain ideas, and unfortunately they grow upon him. He has struggled hard to be rich. Now, of course, I know very little about his affairs, but everything points to the fact that he is a very rich man."

"Yes," sighed Claude ; " he is, I think, very rich. "

" We will take it to be so. Well, then, why cannot he be content, and not be constantly striving for more ? "

Claude sighed again.

" I like money, wealth, power, and the rest of it ; and I could go into London, say, and work up a prosperous practice ; but I am happy here, with just enough for my needs ; so I say to myself, ' Why should I stir ? ' "

" You are right, doctor. But my father's case—what can we do ? "

" I'll tell you. Let me have your co-operation more. I want him weaned from this hunt for wealth ; and the only way to achieve this is for you and your cousin to give way to him in everything. Never thwart him, for fear of bringing on one of those terrible fits. "

" I will try in every way, " replied Claude.

"Any opposition to his will would be seriously hurtful. Then, as to his life, it really rests with you to wean him in every way from his present pursuits. Company, visits, travel, anything to diver his attention from the constant struggle for more of the sordid dross."

"But if you told him all this, doctor? I feel so helpless."

"I have told him again and again, without success, but if we all combine more and more to keep up the pressure, we may win at last."

"And in the meantime?"

"In the meantime we can quiet our consciences with the knowledge that we are doing what is right."

"Fast asleep, dear," said Mary, entering the room just then; and Claude directed an uneasy look at the doctor.

"Papa does not often sleep so long as this," said Claude, after an uneasy interval.

"But it seemed a pity to disturb him," replied Mary, and the doctor bent his head gravely. "He seemed to be so comfortable. Woodham was there when I went in. She

had been shutting the window, as it was growing chilly."

"Quite right," said the doctor.

"She said she had been in before to remove the coffee cups ; and I waited some time to see if he would wake, but, as he did not, I came away. That's what is the matter with uncle."

The doctor looked round sharply.

"Sleeping in the day time, and in the evenings. Why doesn't he save it all up till night?"

They sat a few minutes longer, and then, unable to keep back the feeling of uneasiness which troubled her, Claude rose, excused herself, and left the drawing-room to see if her father was awake.

"Still asleep?" said Mary, as she returned.

"Yes," said Claude, looking in a troubled way from one to the other ; but the doctor seemed to be so very calm that she felt ashamed of the uneasy sensation which was troubling her, and, telling herself that she was foolishly nervous, she joined in the conversation. Then Mary sang a song, which the doctor insisted upon being repeated.

"I always felt and said that if ever I

married it would be a lady with a charming voice."

"Well," said Mary sharply, "every one says I have a charming voice."

"You have indeed," said the doctor enthusiastically.

"I need have something charming about me by way of compensation," cried Mary, as she made a grimace. "Perhaps, Doctor Asher, you had better propose for me."

"Mary!" exclaimed Claude, flushing up to the roots of her hair.

"I don't mean it, dear," said Mary demurely. "The tongue is an unruly member, you know."

"Well," said the doctor, as he leaned back in his chair, with his eyes half closed, "some young ladies do not object to marrying a man thirty years their senior. Why not?"

"Shall I stand up and walk round, so that you may see all my graces and action?" said Mary banteringly.

"A young man looks at the outward graces of form and complexion," said the doctor gravely; "a man of my age looks for those of

the mind. He wants a companion who can talk."

"Oh, I can talk," said Mary merrily; "can't I, Claude?"

"Mary, dear, I must request that you will not speak like this," said Claude, very gravely. "You hurt me; and would you mind going in again and seeing if papa is awake."

"Are you going to send me to bed, too, for being a naughty girl?" said Mary, rising.

Claude made no reply, but there was a good deal conveyed in her intent gaze, which for that moment Mary seemed to resent; but directly after her bright eyes beamed upon her cousin, and she passed close behind her chair, giving her an affectionate tap on the shoulder as she passed.

As she reached the door she turned, and there was a merry, yet half-pathetic look in her eyes as she said quickly,—

"No, thank you, Doctor Asher, I am a kind of lay nun."

"Mary says a great deal sometimes that she does not mean," said Claude quickly. "But as papa does not seem to come, you would like

a little seltzer water and the spirits, would you not?"

"I? No, no, my dear child, no," said the doctor, taking out his watch. "I do take these things sometimes for sociability's sake, but I always avoid them if I can, and I have a good opportunity here. Eleven o'clock. How the time flies. I must be off."

"Pray don't say no because the spirits are not in the room."

"Believe me, I am so old a friend now, that I should not scruple to ask for them if I was so disposed.—Hah! Yes, that is one of the things which teach us that we are growing old."

"I do not understand you."

"I meant your cousin's acuteness; when a man is about fifty, young ladies consider him a safe mark for their shafts."

"Don't think that, Doctor Asher. There is no malice in my dear cousin, but her deformity has caused her to be petted and indulged. She has not had a mother's constant care."

"Neither have you, my child."

"No," said Claude quietly; "but believe

me, my cousin would be deeply grieved if she knew that she had said— Yes. What's the matter? Papa?"

Claude had started from her chair, for, after giving a sharp tap at the door, Sarah Woodham had entered, looking ghastly, her dark eyes so widely open that they showed a white ring about the iris, her lips apart, and her hands convulsively twisting and tearing the apron she held out before her.

"Master, my dear. He frightens me."

"Don't be alarmed," said the doctor quickly, as he rose perfectly cool and collected, and followed Claude out of the room, while, as the door swung to, the woman uttered a hoarse, panting sound, threw herself upon her knees, and clasping her hands together, she rocked herself to and fro.

"Oh, Isaac! husband!" she moaned, "it is too terrible. Heaven help me! Why did I come here?"

"Mary! Papa!" cried Claude, as she ran into the study, followed by the doctor.

"Hush! Don't be alarmed," said Mary. "I only thought that he was not breathing

quite so naturally as he should, and I sent Woodham to fetch you."

Claude flew to her father's side, and caught his hand, looking intently in his face and then inquiringly at the doctor, who advanced in a calm, professional way, removed the lamp shade, drew the light so that it would fall upon the patient's face, proceeded to feel his pulse, and then opened his eyelid to gaze attentively in the pupil.

"Quick, tell me!" cried Claude, in an excited whisper; "is it another fit?"

"No," said the doctor gravely. "Be calm and quiet. I should like him to wake up naturally. There is nothing to mind."

Claude uttered a sigh of relief, and closed her eyes for a few moments.

"What is the matter?" she said then.

"I am not sure yet, but I fear that it is what we said—an overdose."

"Oh, Doctor Asher!"

"Hush, my child; don't be agitated. There, he will sleep more easily now," he continued, as he unfastened the insensible man's collar and drew off his tie.

“You are not deceiving me?”

“Deceiving you?” said the doctor reproachfully.

“Can I do anything, ma’am?” said Woodham, softly entering the room.

“No, I think; nothing,” said the doctor thoughtfully. “I am very glad I had not gone.”

“Then you think—there is danger?”

“Danger? No, no, my dear child. There, let him rest. Miss Dillon, will you draw back that lamp and replace the shade? That’s it. Better let him sleep it off quietly.”

Woodham quickly raised the lamp and set it down in its old place, while Mary carefully put on the shade, with the effect that the room was once more gloomy of aspect, save where the bright light was condensed upon the table.

As soon as this was done, Claude looked appealingly in the doctor’s face, her eyes seeming to ask—What next?

The question was so plainly expressed that Asher said, with a smile,—

“What next? Oh, we must let him sleep

it off. I don't suppose that he will be very long before he wakes."

Claude's hands seemed to go naturally together, and she passed one over the other, while Sarah Woodham stood gazing intently at Gartram, and a curious shudder ran through her from time to time.

"But, Doctor Asher," said Claude at last, "I do feel so helpless—so lonely. I—"

"Oh, come, come," cried the doctor encouragingly; "don't look at it so seriously. It is a heavy sleep, and may last for hours. I'll stop for a bit, and then come in quite early in the morning. Perhaps it would be as well for somebody to sit up."

Claude tried to speak, but she could not. She laid her hand upon the doctor's arm, and stood, with her lip quivering, gazing down at her father till she could command her voice, and then she whispered huskily,—

"Don't go."

She could say no more, but stood looking appealingly in his eyes.

"You mean stay till he wakes?"

She nodded quickly.

"Oh, certainly, if you wish it ; but I ought to tell you that I hardly think it necessary."

"I do wish it," said Claude. "Do not you, Mary?"

"Yes."

"By all means."

"I will sit with you. Mary, too, will keep us company."

"No, no," said the doctor in a whisper, "there is no need for that. If I stay, it is with the understanding that you both go to bed."

Sarah Woodham was standing back in the shadow, but she appeared to be listening eagerly to every word.

"But we should make it less dull for you," pleaded Claude.

"I am never dull when I sit up with a sick person," said the doctor didactically. "These are my hours for study of my patient. No, no ; if I am to stay it is as the doctor—the master of the situation. You will go to bed."

"But you will want refreshments—somebody within call."

"To be sure, and there will be our old friend Mrs Woodham. You will sit up?"

"Yes, sir, of course," said the woman eagerly.

"That's right. Now, then, ladies, if you please, we must have utter silence till Mr Gartram wakes."

Claude sighed, but she bowed her head, and turned to leave the room with Mary; but as she reached the door, she hurried back to where her father was seated, and bent over him to kiss his forehead.

"Must I go, doctor?" she whispered.

"Certainly," he said quietly.

"But if he seems worse, you would have me called?"

"Directly."

The two girls left the room, Claude beckoning to Sarah Woodham, who followed them out.

"You will make coffee for Doctor Asher."

"Yes, ma'am, of course."

"Go back and ask him when he would like it brought to him; and, Sarah, you will come and tell me how papa is. I shall not undress—only lie down."

“You may depend on me, Miss Claude.”

“But you—is anything the matter? You look so ill.”

“I was a bit startled at master’s way of breathing, my dear. I thought he was going to be much worse.”

Claude went back into the drawing-room with Mary Dillon, neither of them noticing how wild and excited the servant grew, and a few minutes after they went slowly upstairs to Claude’s room.

Sarah Woodham softly retraced her steps to the study, tapped gently, and the door was opened by the doctor, who stood in the opening, book in hand.

“When will I have coffee? Oh, about four o’clock. I have only just had tea. Go and lie down somewhere within call—where I can find you.”

“I am not sleepy, sir.”

“No; but you may be by-and-by. Go and lie down on the sofa in the dining-room, I can easily find you there. Why, my good woman, you look ghastly.”

Sarah Woodham shrank away.

“Don’t disturb me till I ring. No : I’ll come for you. Sleep is the best thing for him.”

“Sleep is the best thing for him,” said Sarah Woodham in a hoarse whisper, as she went slowly back into the hall, and then into the servants’ quarters, from whence, after a few minutes, she returned to go about in a silent way like a dark shadow, closing and fastening doors, before listening for awhile on the study mat, and then going into the dining-room, where she seated herself on one of the chairs, resting her chin upon her hands, and gazing straight before her in the darkness. Then for a time all was still, save a low sigh, almost like a moan, which came from the suffering woman’s breast, followed by a shiver and a start, for it was as if the hand of the dead had just been laid upon her shoulder.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE NIGHT ALARM.

“ASLEEP!”

“You, sir? I—I suppose I must have been,” faltered Sarah.

“Well, why not? I just came to see if you were within reach, in case I wanted you.”

“Master, sir?”

“Just the same.”

The doctor went out just as silently as he had entered, and Sarah heard the study door softly close, when once more she uttered the same low, moaning sigh, and rocked herself to and fro in her chair as she seemed to see the hard, thin face of her husband gazing straight at her, as she had seen it when he was dying in their cottage, and laying upon her the terrible duty she was to fulfil.

How long she sat like that she could not tell, but hours must have passed unnoted—

hours during which, with eyes unvisited by sleep, she had gone on and on through her old life, and the scenes, when her husband had returned from his work, bitterly reviling Gartram for some real or fancied wrong, and then a light seemed to flash into the room like the light she had been expecting, and the doctor stood before her with a curious, intense look in his countenance, one she recalled vividly as having been there on the day her husband died.

Meanwhile Claude and Mary had sat talking for some time about the strange ending of the evening. Claude, in spite of her anxiety on her father's behalf, feeling half pleased, half frightened by Glyddyr's acts.

He appeared so strange, she thought, so shrinking in her presence, and so fearful of intruding upon her, even to be ready to go away.

Was this the man's real love for her? Did he really care for her? and was she misjudging him in thinking that his desire was for her future prospects alone—her money?

She shuddered with dread lest he really should love her, and then her heart sank lower

and lower, for the stern, upbraiding look of Chris Lisle was before her. The face of the boy companion, for whom she had always felt a warm affection, one which she knew in her heart, though she had not confessed it, had ripened into woman's love for man.

"Are we going to sit up, or try to sleep, Claude?" said Mary at last.

"I am going to sit up, Mary. You are going to lie down and sleep."

"Doctor Asher said that we were both to lie down and rest."

"Yes; and you will do so. I could not sleep if I did. It is impossible."

"But uncle is not seriously ill now, dear."

"How do we know, Mary? He is not as he should be. I know—I feel that he is in an unnatural state."

Mary slowly rose, walked across the room to the washstand, and stood there for some minutes before turning to her cousin.

"There," she said; "now I feel as you do—that it would be impossible to sleep. Let's have a quiet talk about uncle, and see if we cannot devise some means for making him

think less about the quarry and money. Oh, Claudie, what a happy world this would be if there were no money and no love."

Claude made no reply but sat gazing out through the window at the sea, where the moon, now high in the heavens, sent a path of silvery light along the dark waters, while, from far below, the waves washed and whispered among the rocks with a musical, plashing sound that rose in a drowsy murmur to the window against which she sat.

"Claude, dear, shall I shut the window now? Isn't it too cool on a night like this?"

Claude turned to her, and looked rather vacantly in her face.

"The tide is going out fast, Mary," she said, in a low, dreamy whisper. "Don't you ever feel that there may be some truth in what they say, that people who are near the end pass away from us with the falling tide?"

"Claudie, dear, are you going to be ill?"

"I hope not."

"And so do I; but do you know you are talking a lot of dreamy nonsense, such as is most distressing at a time like this. We

haven't got anybody near the end. Oh, what nonsense! It's all old-fashioned silliness."

Claude shook her head.

"No," she said, "there is something in it all, Mary, and to-night it is as if some great trouble were coming upon us."

"Are you going to set up for a prophetess, dear?"

"Shall we go down and see how my father is, Mary?"

"And insult Dr Asher by setting his commands at defiance. No; I am going to sit here patiently till morning, unless he sends word to us that uncle has woke up, and that he has gone to bed like a Christian. Claude, dear, your father must be a very unhappy man."

"Then it is our duty to try and make him happy."

"By doing everything he wishes us to do?"

Claude felt the hot blood flush into her cheeks again and she made no reply. She only turned to look out at the broad path of light stretching far away over the sea, and, as the water murmured about the rocks, it was as if some solemn spell of silence had fallen

upon them, influencing Mary so that she ceased speaking, leaving the bantering remarks ready, unsaid. Claude put her arm around her cousin, and laid her head upon her shoulder, thinking of the words that had been spoken, and of why they were sitting up, till her heart almost sank, and the sea began to be to her full of strange whisperings and portents of some trouble to come.

And so hour after hour glided by, till they were chilled by the cold night air, but neither moved till they were electrified by a quick, light tapping on the door, which was opened before they could reach it, and from out of the darkness came a husky voice which sounded familiar.

“Come down, Miss Claude, at once.”

“Ah! Woodham? How is he?”

“Don’t ask me, my dear, but make haste down. You may be wanted. Doctor Asher wishes me to go and fetch Doctor Rixton.”

“But why? What for?”

“Miss Claude, dear, don’t ask me,” said the woman, in suffocating tones, as she turned slowly away.

Claude hurriedly followed her down toward the study door, where she stood trembling for a few moments, feeling that there had then been a meaning in the portent which had troubled her that night. Then, turning the handle, she went into the room.

“Well, back so soon?” said the doctor, whose face was from her. “Is he coming?”

“Doctor Asher.”

“You, Miss Gartram!” he said, in a hoarse whisper, as he turned sharply round. “What is it? Why have you come?”

“Woodham called me. What is the matter? Is he worse?”

“Hush!” said the doctor, in a hurried way, as he took her hand. “Don’t be agitated. We must hope for the best, and—”

“Then he is worse,” cried Claude, breaking from him and running to her father’s side, but only to shrink back.

For the light had been shifted so that it should fall upon Gartram’s fixed, stern face, in which she read so terrible a reality that it was as if a hand of ice had clutched her heart, paralyzing thought and action, so that she stood

there with staring eyes and parted lips, feeling that she was in the presence of death.

Then the reaction came, and, uttering a gasp, her womanly, helpful nature came to the front.

“I am not a child,” she said in a quick, passionate voice. “Tell me; how is this? When was he taken worse? Doctor Asher, why don’t you speak to me? Tell me what I can do to help.”

He shook his head.

“I am doing everything possible, and have sent Mrs Woodham for Doctor Rixton to share the responsibility.”

Claude caught him in turn by the wrist, drew him right to the far side of the room, by the panel of the bookshelves which formed the masked door, and in a whisper, as if she were afraid that her father should hear, she said—

“Is he dead?”

“No, no—no, no, my dear Miss Gartram. It is only what I have always feared, but he would not be advised. Look, my child, look!”

He went quickly to Gartram’s side, and drew

something from his breast pocket and held it before Claude in the light.

“Yes, I know,” she said, “the medicine bottle—the sedative draught.”

“Yes,” said Asher, quietly. “You saw that he had it in his breast.”

“It is generally in that cabinet. He keeps it there.”

“Yes,” said the doctor; “but I found it in his breast pocket as I was trying to place him in an easier position. What can a medical man do when his patient acts in direct opposition to his wishes?”

“I don’t understand you—that is the medicine you prescribed for him.”

“Yes, my child,” said the doctor, in quick, angry tones; “but if I order a patient to take a tablespoonful of brandy, I don’t mean him to take a bottle.”

“Oh!” ejaculated Claude, the word coming from her breast like a moan.

“You see he had this to take, but he has been in the habit of carrying it in his pocket, to apply to as a drunkard does to a flask. I suspected to-night that he had taken a stronger

close than usual, or at more frequent intervals, and thought that the effect, as he was so inured to it, would pass off, but—”

“It will, doctor—oh, say it will,” whispered Claude. “Why don’t you give him something? Would wine or spirits be of any good? Ah, here is Doctor Rixton.”

She ran to open the door as steps were heard in the hall, but it was Sarah Woodham who entered, holding her hand to her side, haggard and breathless, as she staggered into the room, only just able to pant forth, “Coming directly,” before she reeled and would have fallen, had not Claude supported her, and let her sink into a chair.

“Hold up, woman!” whispered the doctor, savagely; “you must not give way.”

“I — ran — there — and — back — Miss Claude,” whispered the woman, and then to herself, as she lay back with her eyes closed, “It is too horrible, too horrible!”

The doctor went to the table and poured out some brandy, as Claude crept with a glass of wine to her father’s side, knelt by him, and, taking his hand, laid her other across her breast.

A chill crept through her, and a hysterical sob struggled to her lips, as she felt that the hand she held was growing clammy. But making an effort, she told herself that, in cases of sudden illness, the extremities did grow cold, and that this was not a matter for alarm. There was the doctor's assurance, too.

Just then she turned her head and saw Sarah Woodham thrusting back the glass the doctor had held to her lips.

"No, no," she said with a shudder ; and the doctor turned away impatiently and set the glass upon the table.

"Miserable teetotal whims," he muttered ; and he went back to Gartram's side, ignoring Claude's presence and inquiring looks as he bent over his patient for a moment, and then hurriedly crossed to the door, flung it open, and went out into the hall, and then to the front door, which he threw open, and stood out in the air wiping the perspiration from his brow.

"He ought to be here by now," he muttered, "he ought to be here by now."

"Sarah ! Sarah !"

The wretched woman opened her eyes with a start, and gazed in a frightened way at her mistress, who was standing over her, and had shaken her shoulder.

“Tell me—you were here?”

“No, my dear, He sent me to lie down in the dining-room to wait till he called me, but I did not go to sleep. I was sitting there—in the dark—thinking, when he came to me and said, ‘I want more help. Your master is worse.’”

“Oh, Sarah, Sarah!” moaned Claude, clinging to her; “tell me it is not so bad as I think. He will not die?”

The woman shuddered as she rose to her feet, and, in a curiously furtive weird way, she crossed to where Gertram lay back in his chair. Pausing once and shrinking away, but evidently overcome by the attraction, she once more advanced, battling the while with that which mastered her, and which drew her unwillingly on, till she stood close to the great easy-chair, and bent down over the form thereon.

Then, drawing herself up to her full height,

she stood there erect, gazing straight before her into space, and muttering strangely to herself.

Claude gazed at her in alarm.

“Sarah,” she whispered, “Sarah! why don’t you speak? Sarah!”

There was no reply, and at last Claude laid her hand upon the woman’s arm, with the result that she turned slowly, muttering to herself the while, in a curiously absent manner, as if all the while unconscious of her mistress’s presence.

“Sarah,” whispered Claude again, as she gazed in affright at the woman’s strange, drawn face, “speak to me! I want comfort—tell me—he is not dead?”

“And I tried so hard,” said the woman, hoarsely. “I tried to do that which was right and just. With all his sins upon his head, unrepentant, harsh and cruel to the last.

“Sarah!”

“Hush, my child, hush!” said the woman in a low voice, full of deep passionate emotion. “I never had a child to love—to call me mother. Oh, my poor dear, helpless, mother-

less, fatherless girl ; and I tried so hard—I tried so hard.”

“ Sarah,” cried Claude, struggling from the woman’s encircling arm, “ you don’t think—”

“ This way, please—quick, sir, quick.”

The door was thrown open, and Doctor Asher entered, followed by a tall grave-looking man, who bowed to Claude, and laid his hat upon the table, looking then inquiringly at Asher.

“ Yes ; of course,” said the doctor. “ My dear Miss Gartram, you will go now.”

“ But, doctor—”

“ No appeal, please ; we must consult over the case and be alone. Trust me ; we will do our best. There, you will come back soon.”

Claude reluctantly allowed herself to be led out of the room, and then, as she stood in the great sombre-looking hall, she in turn staggered and would have fallen, but for Sarah Woodham’s arm, and she suffered herself to be led into the drawing-room, where, with the awful truth beginning to grow and grow till it overshadowed her like a cloud,

she was about to fling herself sobbing in a chair, when a low sigh caught her ear.

Looking up, it was to see Mary Dillon coming slowly into the room, her eyes closed, and feeling her way along by the door, and then supporting herself by the various pieces of furniture she passed.

“Mary !” cried Claude.

“Yes ; I have been there—in there all the time. You did not see me, but I heard everything. Oh, Claude, is it all true ?”

She did not wait for a response, but sank down, covering her face with her hands, and completely prostrated by her grief.

“No, no,” whispered Claude, going to her, kneeling by her side, and, hungering for love and sympathy, drawing the weeping girl to her breast. “Doctor Asher said that it was not so, Mary darling,” she whispered ; “help me to pray. He must not—he cannot die.”

Sarah Woodham stood near them hearing every word, and a shiver swiftly ran through her as she listened to the allusions to death, and again and again, with her face working, she stretched out her hands as if to

try and comfort the two weeping girls, but only to shake her head sadly, and draw back from where they were now clasped in each other's arms.

And the time went on.

Every few moments Claude rose to go to the door, and after opening it, stood listening intently, but the most she could hear was the low muffled sound of voices, and each time she returned to her cousin's side with a despairing sigh.

"We seem so helpless," she exclaimed. "Surely I might go back now." But she made no attempt to disobey the doctor's commands, and waited and waited till the low sobbing gave place to silent despair; and with eyes fixed upon the door, all sat waiting for the tidings that they dared not hope now would be good.

A step at last in the hall, and Claude flew to the drawing-room door, and flung it open, but only to shrink away, as she saw that it was not Asher, but the strange doctor—a new comer to the place—and one whom they had hardly spoken to before.

He came slowly across the hall, and bowed his head gravely as he entered, looking from one to the other, as if waiting to be interrogated, but no one spoke; and as the door swung to, the light of another day came stealing through the windows, and between the half-drawn blinds in a curious ghastly way, making everything look unreal, and the candles lit upon the table burn with a sickly glare.

Claude made an effort to speak twice, but the words failed upon her lips. She felt that she must rush by this strange, solemn-looking man, and seek the information she wanted in her father's room, but her limbs refused to act, and she stood holding on by the back of a chair, while the new doctor now fixed his eyes on Sarah Woodham, who stood there wild-looking and motionless, her eyes appearing to burn.

"I grieve to say," said the new doctor at last, and then he turned, for the woman's eyes glared at him so fiercely that he ceased, paralysed.

"Well," she said harshly, "Why do you not speak?"

“Doctor Asher has given me a history of the case,” he said, with an effort. “It is a most regretful incident. No one to blame. Perhaps Doctor Asher might have—but no—I should probably, under the circumstances, have been guilty of the same error.”

He paused in his low, faltering delivery, for Sarah Woodham had taken a step toward him, bending forward, and fascinating him with her wild, dark eyes.

Then, after a painful interval, as a low, querulous wail arose from outside, followed by what sounded like a fiendish chorus of chattering laughter from the rocks below, where a flock of gulls were quarrelling over some refuse cast up by the sea, the doctor continued,—

“We have done everything possible under the circumstances, but the case was beyond our power. Ladies, this is a most painful communication for me to have to make. Doctor Asher—completely prostrated by grief. His most prominent patient, and—”

Claude stretched out one hand blindly for that of her cousin, and took a step toward the

door, but, as they reached it, Mary uttered a low cry and shrank back, withdrawing her hand.

Claude did not notice the action, but went slowly out of the room, as one goes deliberately on when walking in sleep.

They followed her to the door and saw her cross the hall, into which the soft glow of morning was now stealing fast, and there was something weird and strange about her movements as she went on and slowly opened the study door, to pass from their sight, as it were, from day into night.

One moment, the morning light bathed her light dress and gave her a look that was mistily transparent; the next, as she passed through the doorway into the shuttered and curtained room, the glow from the lamp within made her black and strange.

Then the door swung to behind her as she walked silently over the thick carpet.

“Miss Gartram! You have come?”

Claude made no reply, but walked straight to the couch upon which her father had been laid, and there she stood mentally stunned and unable to realise the fact.

His face looked stern and hard, but no more stern and hard than she had often seen it when she had stolen into the room where he had been lying asleep—as he appeared to be lying now—after some tiresome, wakeful night. Everything was the same, even to the faint odour of drugs and spirits which pervaded the place.

For one instant a flash of hope illumined her dark heart, but it was only for a moment. No: he would wake no more. The end had come; and as the truth forced itself deep down into her heart, she sank slowly upon her knees, placed her hands gently round the stalwart figure, and laying her cheek against the stony face, she whispered softly,—

“Father, father! I loved you very dearly. Left—left alone!”

## CHAPTER XII.

### HER OWN MISTRESS.

CHRIS LISLE sat at the table, over his breakfast, but nothing was good.

He had all that money lying at his bank, and after trying all kinds of subterfuges to satisfy his conscience that he had as good a right to it as anybody—that if he had not won it some one else would—that people who gambled deserved no sympathy—that all was fair in money wars, as he dubbed gaming—and that he would do more good with the money than any one else—and the like, his conscience refused to be bamboozled and told him constantly that he had won that money by a clever piece of dishonourable sharpening, and that he ought to be ashamed of himself.

And he was.

That was one non-appetiser ; the other was

his interview with the gardener the previous night, and over this, after waking with it ready to confront him, he had been metaphorically gnashing his teeth.

“How I could have made myself such an ass! How I could have been such an idiot as to run such risks! It is like dragging her down to be the common talk and gossip of the place. Why, I shall always be that scoundrel’s slave. What an idiot he must have thought me!”

No wonder the coffee tasted bitter, and that the bacon was too salt, while he thrust the butter away as rancid, and the bread as being dry.

“If it were not for one thing I’d— Well, Mrs Sarson?”

The landlady had run in hastily, looking pale and excited, and then stood speechless before him.

“Is anything the matter?” exclaimed Chris, the blood rising to his cheeks, as with boyish dread he seemed to read in his landlady’s eyes the fact that she knew of the past night’s escapade.

“Matter, indeed, sir! Then you have not heard?”

“Heard what?”

“Mr Gartram, sir—dead!”

“What!”

Chris Lisle sprang from his chair and stood feeling as if the room was swimming round him, while the landlady went on hurriedly.

“I’ve just this minute heard, sir. There was a dinner-party; Doctor Asher and that Mr Glyddyr, who has the yacht, were there; and they say he was taken bad about eleven. Doctor Asher stopped, and, in the middle of the night, the new doctor was fetched, too.”

“Oh, it can’t be true,” cried Chris, and dashing out of the room he seized his hat and hurried along the street, but had not gone far before he was conscious of the fact that groups of people were standing about talking.

Further on he saw that shutters were closed; and as he reached the harbour there, lying off some distance was Glyddyr’s yacht, with

a flag up, half-mast high, while, as soon as he came in sight of the Fort — Gartram's pride — in place of the bright glistening windows, every opening had a dull dead look, and appeared to be staring at him blankly. There was no doubt now—every blind was drawn down.

Chris uttered a groan.

“My poor darling, it will break her heart! Poor old fellow! Cut off like that.”

Resentment, bitterness, died out in this great sorrow; and Chris could only see now the fine-looking, masterful, elderly man, who had always been his friend, till ambition had led him astray, and he had discarded the suitor who had grown up to love his child.

It seems too horrible! One of these terrible fits.”

He was on his way up to ask to see Claude, and try to administer some consolation, but he paused. It would be an outrage to go now. It would be indecent to force his way there in disobedience to the wishes of the man who was lying blank and cold—

blank and cold as the edifice he had so proudly reared with the money he had fought for so long,

“No,” thought Chris. “I must go back and write.”

In the manly frankness of his disposition, up to that moment, no thought of obstacle removed, or the future that lay before him, had come across his brain, till just then he caught sight of the gardener coming quickly along the town street, when, like a flash, came back to him the scene of the past night, and his discovery. Then, with the incongruity of human nature, there came a feeling of satisfaction in the thought that Gartram could never now sting him with contemptuous allusions to his wretched escape, and that now he need not fear this man.

Momentary thoughts, which he chased away with a feeling of indignation against himself as he stopped the gardener.

“Is it—true?”

“Yes, sir. It’s true enough. He was a hard master, one as come down upon you

awful if he see a weed ; but I'd give that there right hand to have him alive and well before me now."

Chris bowed his head and walked slowly back, to start aside and gaze fiercely in the eyes of the man whom he encountered a few yards farther on, for, as he was approaching the post-office, Glyddyr came out suddenly with a telegraph form in his hand.

The two young men paused as if arrested by some power over which they had no control, and as they stood gazing at each other, Chris, waiting for Glyddyr to speak, a crowd of thoughts flashed through his brain.

Claude—alone—her own mistress, what of your triumph now !

Very different were Glyddyr's thoughts. Claude was somehow mixed up with them. but he read in his rival's eye distrust, suspicion, and a hidden knowledge of his latest acts ; and they passed on rapidly through his mind, till he saw Chris Lisle denouncing him as a murderer and about to seize him then.

Neither spoke, and after the long, intense gaze of eye into eye had lasted some mo-

ments, each went his way, one back to his yacht to try and make up his mind whether he ought to call at once, the other home to sit down and write to Claude, and tell her that he was always hers, and that in this, her terrible hour of affliction, he was longing to try and share her pain.

“And if I said that,” thought Chris, as he slowly tore up the letter, “she would think it an insult, and that I am triumphing over the dead.”

So Chris’s letter, full of the tender love he felt never reached Claude’s hand.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### GLYDDYR COMMUNES WITH SELF.

GLYDDYR gave the orders to unmoor and make sail, after a great deal of hesitation, and then countermanded those orders, and went down into his cabin. There he made the man who acted as steward and valet open for him a pint of champagne, which he tossed off as if suffering from a burning thirst.

That seemed to do him good. His hand ceased to shake, and the peculiar sensation of sinking passed off for the time as he sat by the cabin window, lit a cigar, and let it out again while he watched the Fort, with its drawn-down blinds, and thought over the last night's proceedings.

"It was an accident," he said to himself, "a terrible mistake, and all in vain. Good heavens! who could have thought that a

little drop of clear white-looking stuff could have done that; and him so used to taking it."

He shrank away from the window, dashed away his cigar and sat down there in the cabin, with his face buried in his hands.

"I ought to have summoned help when I saw how strange and cold he turned. It would have saved him, poor old fellow! I wouldn't for all the world that it should have happened, it seems impossible, and I can't even believe it yet."

With a start of childish disbelief, he straightened himself and looked out of the cabin window, as if he had half-expected to see the blinds drawn up, and the Fort looking as usual.

But there was no change, and, with a groan of agony, he turned away and stamped his foot with impatient rage.

"Just like my cursed luck," he cried. "Any one but me would have made a pot of money over Simoom. I could have made enough to free me from this wretched bondage, but now it's just as if something always

stood between me and success, and balked all my plans."

He let his head sink upon his hands, and sat thinking again, but only to raise himself in an angry fashion and ring the bell.

"You ring, sir?" said the steward at the end of a minute.

"Of course, I rang," said Glyddyr with petulant rage. "You heard me ring, and knew I rang, or you wouldn't have come. Well, where is it?"

"I beg pardon, sir?"

"I say, where is it?"

"Where is what, sir?"

"The pint of champagne I told you to bring."

"Beg pardon, sir, I did bring it and you drank it."

"What? roared Glyddyr. "Yes, of course, so I did. I had forgotten. Bring me another."

"Guv'nor on the bouse?" said one of the sailors.

"Hold your row. Upset over that affair up at the toyshop," said the steward in a

whisper, and he took in the fresh pint of wine.

“Set it down.”

“Yes, sir.”

The steward beat a retreat, and Glyddyr tossed off another glass, poured out the remainder, and sat gazing at it vacantly for a few minutes before taking it up, his hand once more trembling violently.

“If I weren’t such a cursed coward,” he said, “I could get on. He must have had a lot before, and that’s what did it. By George, it gives me the horrors!”

He tossed off the wine.

“No,” he muttered as he set down the glass; “it wasn’t what I gave him. It wasn’t enough, and to think now that there was all that lying ready to my hand, without my having the pluck to take what I wanted. I must have been a fool. I must have been mad.”

“Curse these bottles!” he cried, after a pause. Pint? They don’t hold half — a wretched swindle. I believe there are thousands lying there; and I might have

borrowed what I wanted, and all would have been well ; but I was such a fool."

"No, I wasn't," he cried, as if apostrophising someone. "How could I get it with that woman coming in and out, and the feeling on me that one of the girls might open the door at any moment. They'd have thought I meant to steal the cursed stuff. Then, too, it seemed as if he might wake up at any moment. Bah ! How upset I do feel. That stuff's no better than water."

He rose angrily, and opened a locker, from which he took out a brandy decanter, and placed it on the table. "Let's have a nip of you. I seem to want something to steady my nerves."

He poured out a goodly dram and tossed it off.

"Ah, that's better ! One can taste you. Seems to take off this horrible feeling of sinking.—Poor old fellow ! Seemed as if he would wake up. Never wake up again.

He started up and looked sharply round, trembling violently ; and then wiped his forehead with his hand.

"This will not do!" he muttered. "I mustn't show the white feather. I've got nothing to fear. Nothing at all. Why should I have? It was an accident; I didn't mean it. No: wouldn't hurt a hair of the old man's head—no, not a hair. Yes: it was an accident."

He drew up his head and picked up the cigar he had thrown down, re-lit it, and after a puff or two, threw it down once more.

"Wretched trash!" he muttered, taking out his case and fiercely biting the end off another. One of Gellow's best. "Ah," he cried, as he brought down his fist upon the table heavily. Only let me once get clear of that man! And I might have done it so easily," he continued, as he lit the cigar, "so very easily, and been free of that cursed incubus for a time."

He let his cigar go out again, and his head sank upon his hands as he stared in a maundering way at the cabin door.

"But it's always my luck—always my luck; and I'm the most miserable wretch that ever crawled."

There was no one present to endorse his words, as the maudlin tears rose to his eyes and dripped slowly down between his feet, nature seeming to distil the wine and spirits he had been imbibing all the morning ever since he had left the cot in which he had lain tossing in a fever of fear all through the night.

But after a time champagne and brandy had their effect, and the abject shivering man of half-an-hour before seemed to have grown defiant as to the future.

He was in the act of snapping his fingers with a half-tipsy laugh, when a boat bumped up against the side, and he heard a trampling on the deck, and the buzz of voices.

“What’s that?” he panted, completely sobered now, and trembling violently, as he suddenly turned to one of the most abject-looking and white-faced creatures it is possible to imagine. “What’s that?” he panted, with his voice trembling; and he took up the brandy to help himself again. “Bah! some boat has struck us That’s all.”

“Beg pardon, sir,” said a voice ; and the steward stood in the door-way.

“Yes ; what is it ?”

“Boat from the shore, sir, with a policeman in the stern and another man.”

“Policeman ? Other man ?” faltered Glyddyr in a low, faint voice ; “what do they want ?”

“You, sir,” said the man ; and then, “Oh, here they are.”

Gladdy sat back, staring at the men wildly.

“Well,” said the steward to himself ; “I have seen the gov’nor a bit on, but this beats all. I say, you might have waited till you were asked to come down.”

This to a policeman who was stooping down to enter the cabin, while Glyddyr clutched the table, and held on, for the sickening sensation in his head threatened a complete collapse.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### WIMBLE FINDS A CURIOSITY.

ANY one who could have watched Michael Wimble shaving himself at early morn would have wondered whether the man were really sane, for, as he performed the operation upon himself, he worked as if it was for practice—to keep his hand in, just as acrobats and instrumentalists go through their tasks constantly, so as to keep a tight hold upon that which has taken them so much time and labour to acquire.

Being a barber, he considered that those who shaved should shave well, and that the wearing of moustache, or the very smallest morsel of whisker was but a weak pandering to the savages who had introduced or followed the moustache movement in the time of the Crimean war.

“It’s filthy, that’s what it is, filthy,” Wimble

used to say ; “and how a man can go about with his face like the back of a wild beast, beats me.”

Consequently, soon after springing from his solitary bed, the owner of the Museum used to set light to a spirit lamp to boil a small shaving pot of water, and then, as there were signs of ebullitions at the side, the brush was dipped in, and the performance commenced with a tremendous lathering.

There were no half-measures. Wimble passed the brush deftly all over his quaintly wrinkled face, till masses of lather hung on to his ears, and covered his cheeks, so that only his eyes were seen. Then, as he glared at himself in a shaving glass, he set to and scraped and scraped his countenance all over, applied the brush again and again in obstinate places, and finished off by grinning hideously in the little mirror, as he stood, with the razor passing over the skin in a way that would have suggested horrors about to be perpetrated by a maniac, weary of his life, to any one who could have seen the process.

Clever as he was, too, in the manipulation, there were at times, however, suggestions that a looker-on might have been right in his ideas. As, for instance, upon the morning in question, when a slip or a pimple—it is needless to say which—necessitated the use of sponge and sticking-plaster.

Then the task was done, and Michael Wimble finished dressing, talking to himself rapidly the while, sundry words which were spoken more loudly than others, giving the key to the subject of the man's thoughts—the old, old theme, love. Other words told too of disappointment and jealousy, and all this tended to make Mr Wimble go the wrong way when he started for his regular morning walk along the shore.

His way was always west, but he went east, so as to pass Chris Lisle's lodgings; and as he did so, staring hard at the drawn-down blinds, and the chimney pot innocent as yet of smoke, he gnashed his teeth softly, for there were two new flowers in Chris's bedroom window—a fuchsia and a geranium, in pots of dazzling red, and the

mignonette box, full of nasturtiums, which flowed over and hung down, had been newly painted a delicate green.

Fresh attentions to the lodger. The previous week clean muslin curtains had been put up, and the week before there was a new cover over the little table in the window upon which lay the big History of England which Mrs. Sarson had taken in, or been taken in with, in shilling numbers, by a book canvasser, and had bound afterwards for one pound fifteen and sixpence, gilt lettered, and blind tooled, the canvasser had said.

That table cover, when Wimble saw it through the half-open window, was composed of crochet work and green satin, and must have been the widow's handiwork, and a delicate compliment to her lodger.

That was bad enough, but the two new flower pots in the bedroom window were beyond all bearing.

"But wait a bit," said Wimble to himself. "I can wait;" and he went on, turned up the glen path, struck off to the left, where he reached the bridge, and, by passing along by

the backs of the cottages, he made his way to the alley by the public-house at the harbour head, and from there round by the boats and down to the sea shore.

Mr. Wimble thought of the widow, and walked fast, gathering shells and scraps of weeds washed up by the tide, and paused from time to time to examine fragments of drift-wood and pieces of rotten rope.

Everything was thrown away though, for he had plenty of duplicates at home, and only exceptional finds were now worthy of a place in the museum.

So limpets, and turritellas, and pectens were passed as unworthy of notice. A pelican's foot shell was transferred to his pocket, but nothing more ; and growing quite low-spirited at last, for three reasons—his ill-luck, love, and the want of his breakfast—he turned at last, made for the cliffs, and came along close under the land, in and out among the rocks where the soft sand lay thick and smooth, past the hollows where the old boots and shoes were washed up in company with the other *dissecta membra* with which shore-dwellers insult the

ocean, in the belief that the tide will play the part of scavenger and sweep everything away, a task that the sea mostly scorns.

And so it was that in sundry corners beneath the mighty granite rocks, piled high like titanic walls, Michael Wimble thought of the widow, and made his way among old baskets, fish-heads, scraps of worn-out netting and tangles of rusty steel, half-covered with rotten fabric suggesting female attire.

No objects these for his museum, for, though old, they were not old enough. Had a few centuries passed since they were cast into the waves, that would have made all the difference, and a thousand years would have made them treasures great as gold.

But it was a barren hunt that morning. There had been no storm to tear away the sand and sweep bare the rock, to leave exposed tarnished old coins once cast ashore from an Armada galley; no serpula encrusted gem; nothing worthy of notice; and Wimble, with his thoughts turning eagerly now from the widow and her lodger to the toast and the rasher of bacon, he passed over his bachelor

rival and stepped out till he came beneath the rocky point upon which Gartram had built his home, and was half-way by when a ray of sunshine flashed from something lying among the rocks in a little patch of soft, dry sand.

It might be a diamond, or at least a crystal ground out of the rocks !

But it was only a clear phial bottle—short, unlabelled, tightly corked, and holding about a teaspoonful of some clear fluid at the bottom.

A disappointment ; but a clean bottle was always useful, and, after a brief examination, the barber transferred it to his pocket, but not until he had removed the cork, sniffed, replaced it, and looked round, asking himself whether it had floated there in the last spring tide.

No ; it seemed too fresh. The cork was too new and dry. It could only have come from about—been thrown from Gartram's windows, and—

Wimble got no further in his chain of reasoning. The vacuum which his nature abhorred was giving him strong hints which he was glad to obey ; and the breakfast he had that morning was excellent for a jealous man in love.

Afterwards he rose, took off his coat to put on his apron, found the bottle in his pocket, put it carelessly in a drawer to wait till it could be washed, and declared himself ready for business. He had not long to wait, for one of his regular customers came for a shave.

“Heard the news, of course?”

“News? no,” said Wimble, stopping short in the stropping of a razor. “What news? What is it?”

“The King of the Castle—dead.”

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE DEAD TELL NO TALES.

“WHAT’S the matter with him?” said one of the men who had come off from the shore to Glyddyr’s yacht, after performing the duty he had in hand.

“Well,” said the steward, laughing, “he’s my boss, so it ain’t for me to say; but if it had been you, I should have said you had been looking into a brandy glass till you were too giddy to stand.”

“Well; that’s what I thought,” said the coroner’s officer, “but being a gentleman, I held my tongue. Thought gents never did take too much.”

“Oh, no; never,” said the steward, sarcastically. “But don’t talk about it; the guvnor’s a good deal upset about the affair at Mr Gartram’s.”

“’Nough to upset any one. Who’d have thought it. Well, good morning.”

“Don’t want me as a witness, do you?”

The officer laughed, and was rowed back to the shore, while Glyddyr sat in his cabin watching the progress of the boat, and asking himself, as he glanced from time to time at the summons to the inquest which he held in his hand, whether he had committed himself in any way by word or look in the presence of the coroner’s officer.

Twice over he turned to the brandy decanter in search of courage, but he shrank from it with a fresh chill of dread.

“It may make me talk too much,” he said; “I might say something I couldn’t take back.”

Hurriedly thrusting the temptation from him, he well bathed his burning temples, and felt refreshed by the cold water.

“Now,” he said, setting his teeth and trying to be firm; “there’s only one man who knows the rights of this case, and I am that man. If I go straight no one can find it out, and there’s a rich wife for me at the end of a few months, and freedom from this cursed load of debt. Well, I’ll go

through it in spite of everything. I will face it out."

But even as he tried to screw himself up his own words struck him with terrible force—

"A rich wife!"

How would he dare to continue his advances towards the child of the man he had murdered?

"I can't do it. I dare not do it," he said in a despairing way. She will be looking me through and through, and some day she might find out. No; Gellow must do his worst, I can't go on."

But as he thought all this his eyes were directed towards the Fort, with its blank-looking casements, and though he shuddered as he thought of the dead man lying there behind one of those blank windows—his work—the man whose hand he had grasped only the night before in friendship, and whom he had cut off by that one act—though he thought of all this with shudders, and vainly tried to screen himself from the darts of conscience by holding up as shield the word

accident—the place had a terrible fascination, and he felt that he must go on now, for there was the sweet young girl heiress to so great a property, there was the ideal seaside home for a man who had yachting proclivities. The place was pretentious, and the mockery of an old Norman castle jarred upon his tastes; but there was the place waiting for him, ready to be his if he only had patience and manly force enough to keep his own counsel.

“And I will,” he said, as he clenched his fists. “It isn’t cowardice; it’s overstrung sensibility. I have the strength, and I will face it all out, come what may.”

He felt cooler now, and began to hesitate as to what he should do. The coroner’s inquest was to him the enemy, and he would have to view the body.

“No, no,” he muttered, “how confused I am—that is, for the jury. I am only a witness called because— Yes, I remember, what the man said now, because I saw the deceased last night.”

“Yes, I saw him last night,” groaned

Glyddyr; "and I feel as if I shall always be seeing him now."

Once more he made an effort to collect himself, and took the situation in the full. He had nearly been committing the grave error of running away, but he had fortunately paused.

"It would have been madness," he thought, "and only inviting pursuit by attracting attention to my actions."

He walked on deck, his nervous excitement having completely counteracted the effect produced by the spirits and wine, and ordered his men into the boat to row him ashore.

He had made up his mind what to do, and as soon as they reached the landing steps he walked straight up to the Fort for the second time that morning.

He was cool now, for he was fully awake to the fact that his life depended upon his calmly facing facts.

Half-way up, towards the bridge, he met Doctor Asher and his colleague, the latter bowing and passing on, but Asher stopped short, and took Glyddyr's extended hand.

"Going in?" he said.

"Yes ; how is she—Miss Gartram ?"

"Terrible state, poor girl ; broken-hearted ; I only saw her for a few moments. Dreadful accident, is it not ?"

Glyddyr felt his blood run cold, and his eyes seemed to him to be vacant, as he gazed straight at the doctor.

"Accident ?" he said, huskily.

"Oh, yes ; no doubt about that. But you understand, do you not ?"

"No—yes—I think I do," said Glyddyr, whose throat felt dry.

"Of course. Poor fellow, I warned him against it over and over again, but it is of no use with a man who once becomes a slave to a drug."

"Yes, I see," said Glyddyr, staring hard at the doctor, but not seeing him.

"I feel as if I were to blame, but, on dispassionate consideration, what could I do ?"

"Of course," answered Glyddyr, "what could you do ?"

"It was better that he should take the drug under my supervision than recklessly alone."

“Yes ; much,” said Glyddyr, vacantly.

“And yet on the face of it one can’t say that it seems so. But what could a medical man do in such a case ? ‘I am suffering for want of sleep,’ he used to say, ‘and I must have this stuff.’ ‘It is madness to take it,’ I said. ‘If you don’t give it me, I shall get it myself at the druggist’s.’ So, of course, I had to give way and exhibit safe doses, but no foresight can prevent a man taking double or triple the quantities prescribed.”

“No ; I see,” said Glyddyr, in the same vacant way. “But do you think he did get more at the druggist’s ?”

“That was my first thought, and I telegraphed to the two nearest and most likely men, but they say in each case, ‘no.’ Most awful accident, Mr Glyddyr. It ought to be a warning to people not to tamper with drugs which they do not understand, eh ?”

“Yes, of course.”

“How can anyone know how much to prescribe or take ? A medical man of long experience has to go very cautiously, for what

is a safe dose for one constitution is certain death to another. But, there : I must go. My colleague, to whom I have every reason to be grateful for his loyal aid, is waiting for me. I wanted help, for I cannot recal when I have been so overcome as by this case. The shock was terrible. Dining with him—called away—returning to find that he was asleep. Let me see you were with him, were you not ? ”

“ Yes, part of the time,” faltered Glyddyr, as he felt a thrill of dread run through him under the doctor’s searching eyes, which seemed to be reading his inmost thoughts ; and he found himself wondering whether this man had really been called away upon two occasions, or had made excuses, so as to watch his every act.

“ And did you notice anything particular ? ”

“ N— no,” faltered Glyddyr ; and then, in response to the sharply applied goad of dread, “ no, nothing ; only that he breathed rather heavily.”

“ To be sure ; yes. But, there : good-bye. We shall meet again at the inquest, I suppose !

I am not surprised at you looking so pale and overcome."

"Do I look pale and overcome?" said Glyddyr hastily, the words slipping from his lips.

"Terribly, my dear sir, terribly. Good morning."

Glyddyr stood looking after him as the doctor walked away, and a fit of trembling came on.

"He was pumping me, and he is suspicious," thought Glyddyr. "Curse him! These doctors have a way of reading a man, and seeing through you. But he could only suspect; and what is suspicion where they want certainty?"

"What could he say," he thought; "and how does it stand? He gave him chloral; Gartram took it himself, and if a little more was given, well, what could they prove unless they saw?"

"No; unless I betray myself, I am safe," he muttered, as he walked up to the principal entrance and rang; but as the loud clangour of the bell ran through the place, the shiver of

dread returned, and he was conscious from his sensations that he must be looking ghastly, and that his lips be white and cracked.

The door was opened by one of the maids.

“Ask Miss Gartram if she can see me for a few minutes,” he said, in a voice he hardly knew as his own.

The maid drew back for him to enter, and showed him into the drawing-room, where the yellow gloom of the light passing through the drawn-down blinds seemed to add to the oppression from which he suffered. Then, as he stood there, his hot eyes fixed themselves upon the chair which had been occupied by Claude when he was there the previous night; and he found himself wondering what he should say to her; and then a singular feeling of confusion came over him as he asked himself why he had come.

A footstep in the hall made him tremble, and he felt as if he could have given anything to be away from the place, for now, in its full force, he felt the terror of the interview he had to go through with the child of the man he had murdered, and who must now be lying

still and stark not many yards away, while in the spirit, where was he?—perhaps about to be present to guard his child.

“If I only had more strength of mind!” groaned Glyddyr, as he vainly tried to string himself up. Then the door was opened, and he was face to face with Mary Dillon.

He drew a breath of relief, and his brain began to grow clearer, as if a mist had been wafted away, and, recovering himself, he advanced with extended hand.

“Will you be seated, Mr Glyddyr?” said Mary, ignoring the extended hand, and sinking wearily on the couch to half close her eyes and wrinkle up her brow.

“Thank you,” he said in a whisper; “I ought to apologise for coming, but—at such a time—dear Claude must—”

His words began to trail off slowly into silence, and he sat gazing at Mary helplessly, as if he could not command the flow of that which he wished to say.

“It is very good of you to come,” said Mary slowly, as if she were repeating a lesson when her thoughts were far away. “But poor

Claude is completely prostrate. She cannot see you. It is cruel of you to ask for such a thing."

"Yes, I suppose so," he said meekly. "But, occupying the position as I do—she in such distress—I felt it a duty, let alone my own warm feelings. Miss Dillon, is there nothing I can do?"

He stopped short now, wondering at his own words, for they had come quickly, and sounded thoroughly natural in their ring.

"No," said Mary, looking at him piercingly now; but he seemed nerved by the instinct of self-preservation, and the knowledge that everything depended upon him being calm.

Mary paused, and appeared to be struggling with her emotion for a few moments. Then, in a cold, hard way, she faced Glyddyr, as if she were defending her cousin from attack.

"No," she said, in clear firm tones. "My cousin is seriously ill, Mr Glyddyr. Broken-hearted at our terrible loss, and anyone who feels respect for her, and wishes to be helpful at such an hour as this will leave her in peace

till time has done something toward blunting the agony she is in."

"Yes," said Glyddyr, "you are quite right.

He stood for a moment undecided, and as if he were about to go ; but as he looked straight before him at the door, he saw mentally Gartram's study ; and a vision of wealth greater than any of which he had ever dreamed, appeared to be lying there waiting for him to call it *mine* ; and the dazzling prospect began to drive away his terrors, and strengthen him in his belief that he was safe. No, he could not go back now, he felt, even if the figure of the dead were to rise up before him in defence of his hoards.

The dead tell no tales, he fancied he heard something within him say ; and then—can the dead know ?

Mary was looking at him inquiringly, and as he became conscious of this, he turned to her sadly and gravely.

"Yes ; you are right," he said, "it must be the kindest treatment to leave her to herself. It was my love for her that brought me here. Tell her, please, from me that my heart bleeds

for her, and that I will wait until she can see me. I can say no more now. I trust you to be my faithful messenger. Good-bye."

He held out his hand, and for a few moments she ignored his action, but as he stood there with his fingers outstretched, she felt unable to resist, and at last she placed her own within his, and he raised them to his lips.

The next minute she listened to his retiring steps as he went along the granite terrace, talking to himself.

"I did not think I could have done it," he said; "but I have only to keep on, and the rest will come easy. I am too much a man of the world to be frightened at shadows after all."

"It was perfect," thought Mary Dillon, as she stood alone in the darkened drawing-room, "nothing could have been better, but I hate him and distrust him. Somehow he makes me shrink away with horror. But it's only prejudice for poor Claude's sake. I'd kill him first. He'd break her heart, and spend her money, and—yes, I'd kill him before he should do all that."

She went slowly out into the hall, and stood hesitating for a few minutes. She appeared to

be listening, and there was a curious weird look in her fine eyes as she glanced quickly here and there before drawing a long breath, and going across to the study door.

Here she paused on the thick wool mat, and tapped softly, but only to utter a faint hysterical cry, and press her hands to her lips, as if to keep back more, for the act had been one to which she was accustomed, and a thrill ran through her as she realised what she had done, and that the familiar, harsh voice could never again call to her "Come in."

She turned the handle, and entered the darkened room to walk firmly across to where Gartram lay, and she stood for some minutes gazing at the dimly-seen figure covered by a white sheet, through which the prominent features of his face stood out.

For a moment she looked as if she were about to raise the white linen cover to gaze upon the face of the dead, but she did not stir, only remained there as if turned to stone, as, from out of the gloom, a low groan arose, and for the moment it seemed to her that the sheet moved and the body heaved.

Mary Dillon felt her heart throb as if it had burst the bond which regulated its slow action ; a terrible feeling of fear paralysed her, and for a time her sufferings were acute.

Then reason came to her aid.

“ He is not dead,” she said ; and trembling violently, she ran to the window to draw aside the curtain, looking over her shoulder in a frightened way ; but before light could shine in upon the solemn chamber she stopped short.

“ Woodham !” she exclaimed, “ you here !”

There was a quick rustling sound, and the startled occupant of the room rose from her knees by the dead man’s side, and stood shrinking from her questioner, and looking as if she was about to flee from the room.

For a few moments the only sounds heard were those of quick breathing and the low hissing wash of the sea among the rocks, for the tide was well in now beneath the walls of the Fort. Then Mary Dillon recovered from her surprise, and went to the woman’s side, and laid her hand upon her arm.

“Come away,” she whispered.

Sarah Woodham jerked herself free, and stood as if at bay, her eyes in the gloom flashing with anger; but with quiet firmness Mary Dillon followed her, took hold of her wrist, and led her from the chamber of death, and out across the hall to the drawing-room.

“Why, Woodham!” said Mary, gently, “what does this mean?”

The woman looked at her fiercely, as if resenting the question, and half turned away.

“Don’t be angry with me for asking,” said Mary gently. “It was so strange.”

“Is it strange for a woman to pray, Miss?” was asked in solemn tones.

“No, no, of course not; but I could not help feeling surprised to see you kneeling there.”

“We all need forgiveness, Miss, for the sins we commit.”

Mary Dillon winced and looked angrily at the woman, for it sounded to her like an insult to the dead for this woman, their servant, to take upon herself so sacred a duty.

“Yes, Miss, we all need forgiveness for what

we have done. Don't keep me, please, I cannot bear to talk now."

"I am sorry if I have said anything to wound you," continued Mary. "I ought to have been pleased; I am sure my poor cousin will for your sympathy and thoughtful ways."

"You think I was praying for him, Miss Mary?"

The girl nodded her head quickly, and remained silent, for she could not trust herself to speak.

Sarah stood gazing before her in a strangely absent way, and went on muttering softly,—

"Isaac, poor husband, you can rest now. If you can see all from where you are, look down upon me. You must feel content—you must be content, and forgive me for keeping you waiting so long."

"Woodham," said Mary gently, after standing watching the strange, weird face before her, and catching a word here and there, "you are ill; the shock of poor uncle's death has been too much for you. There, try and be calm."

"Miss Mary," said the woman hoarsely, and

her eyes glowed with her great excitement, "what do you mean? Have I been talking, like, in my sleep?"

"Yes," said Mary, smiling in her troubled face, and trying to soothe her.

"Yes! What did I say? Quick; tell me. I didn't say anything aloud?"

"Yes, you did. I heard parts of what you spoke."

"Tell me!" cried the woman, excitedly. "Quick! What did I say?"

"You talked about prayer and forgiveness, and spoke about your poor husband. There, there; try and be calm. This has been too much for you, and has brought up all your old sorrows. You want rest and a good long sleep."

"What else did I say?"

"Oh, I don't remember much more."

"You must," cried the woman angrily; "I will know."

"Very little else. I think you said that you hoped your husband was looking down upon you, or words to that effect. There, don't let us talk about it any more. Go and

lie down, and when you are well rested come and help me again. We have so much to do. My poor cousin is completely prostrate."

"Yes," said the woman, looking at her searchingly. "Poor Miss Claude! Broken-hearted. He worshipped her, in his way—in his way."

"Come," said Mary, gently, as she tried to lead her from the room, for the woman seemed to her as one distraught.

"Tell me again; try to recollect. What did I say?"

"Surely I have told you enough," said Mary. "There, you are ill."

"Yes, ill—sick at heart—sick with horror," whispered the woman, clinging to her with convulsive strength. "I came in and looked at his poor appealing face, and it was like seeing Isaac—my husband, again—snatched away so suddenly, just when he was so strong and full of what he meant to do; and it was as if master's eyes were staring at me and read my heart, and knew everything—everything, and it was too horrible to bear."

The woman burst into a passionate fit of

hysterical weeping, and sank upon her knees, covering her face with her hands, rocking herself to and fro, and bending lower and lower, till her arms were upon her knees.

Mary spoke to her, knelt beside her, and tried to whisper words of comfort, about resignation and patience, but without avail. Nothing she said appeared to be heard; and at last—wearied, hopeless, and suffering, too, from the terrible trouble which had fallen upon the house—she knelt there in silence beside the moaning and sobbing woman, her hands clasped in her lap, and her eyes fixed upon vacancy, as she thought of how happy they had all been by comparison a few hours before.

Mary Dillon was startled from her fit of sad musing by the opening of the drawing-room door.

“Claude!” she exclaimed, “I thought you were asleep.”

Her cousin gave a look that was almost reproachful, and came slowly to where Sarah Woodham crouched.

As Claude laid her hand upon the sobbing woman’s shoulder, it was as if the latter had

received a shock. She looked up wildly, and hurriedly rose to her feet, pressed her hair back from her eyes, and made a tremendous effort to master the emotion to which she had given way. Then, with a heavy sigh she grew calm, her distorted features resumed their old saddened dreamy expression, and she moved towards the door.

. Claude tried to speak to her, and her lips moved, but no words came, for her face began to work, and she was turning away when the woman seized her hand, kissed it passionately, and hurried from the room.

“We are not alone in our suffering, Mary,” said Claude at last; and she drew her cousin to her breast and wept silently upon her shoulder, while Mary gave her the most loving form of consolation that woman can give to woman, the silent pressure that tells of heart beating for heart in sympathetic unison, as they stood together in the darkened room.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### MR WIMBLE RAKES FOR INFORMATION.

AN enormous increase has taken place during the past five-and-twenty years in local journalism. England seems to have been almost Americanised in respect of news, for every centre worthy of the enterprise has been furnished with its newspaper, in which everything is told that is worthy of chronicling, and very often, from want of news, something unworthy of the paper upon which it appears. Notably that celebrated paragraph about So-and-So's horse and cart, which, left untended, moves on ; the horse is startled by shouts, begins to trot, then gallops, and is finally stopped. "It was fortunate that the accident occurred before noon, for at that hour the children would have been leaving school, and," etc., etc.—suggestion of the horror of what might have been.

But Danmouth was not a centre worthy of

the enterprise, and, with the exception of a few copies of the county paper which came in weekly to partly satisfy the thirst for news, the inhabitants had no fount to depend upon save Michael Wimble, and to him they gravitated for information respecting the proceedings all around, from a failure, scandal, or accident on shore up to a shipwreck.

Consequently, Wimble's business on the morning of Gartram's death was so great that he began to think that he must hire a boy to lather, and the leather slipper nailed up against the wall to serve as a quaintly original till had to be emptied twice.

As a rule, the "salt" personages who hung about the cliff, staring into the sea, came to be shaved on Saturdays, but the news on the wing prompted every man to have a clean shave that morning, and many a stalwart fisher lady regretted that she had not a hirsute excuse for visiting the shop.

Wimble made the most of such information as he was able to glean, and as the morning advanced, he was able to keep on making additions, till the one little seed he received

first thing came up, grew and blossomed into a news plant that would have been worth a good deal in town.

Towards evening, though, the excitement at Wimble's museum had fallen off, and gathered about the Harbour Inn, where the gossips of the place, clean shaven, and looking unusually like being in holiday trim, were able to quench their double thirst.

Michael Wimble sighed as he stood at his door looking towards that inn.

"Ah," he said to himself, "now, if I had a licence to sell beer by retail to be drunk on the premises"—he was quoting from a board with whose lettering he was familiar—"they would have stopped; and my place being nearest to the Fort, the coroner would have held the inquest there."

"Hah!" he said aloud, after a pause, "how it would have read in the paper: 'An inquest was held at Wimble's Museum, Danmouth'—eh? I beg your pardon, Mr Brime, sir; I didn't hear you come up. Shave, sir? Certainly, sir. Come in."

Wimble's heart beat high as he thought of

the chance. His customers had pumped him dry, and gone away ; and here, by a tremendous stroke of luck, was the commencement of a perfect spring of information to refill his well right to the brim.

Reuben Brime, who looked worried and haggard, entered the museum, took his place in the Windsor arm-chair, was duly covered with the print cloth, after removing collar and tie, and laid his head back in the rest.

“ Why, you look fagged out, Mr Brime, sir,” said Wimble, quietly walking to the door, closing it, and slipping the bolt.

The gardener from the Fort was nervous and agitated. Death in the house—sudden death—had unhinged him. His master might have been poisoned, either by his own hand or by that of an enemy. That would be murder. He was bound, as it were, for the sacrifice ; there were a dozen razors at hand ; the barber’s aspect was suspicious, and he had closed the door. What did it mean ?

“ I say,” cried the gardener, sitting bolt upright, “ what did you do that for ? ”

“ Do what, Mr Brime ? Fasten the door ?

I'll tell you. I've been that worked this day that I haven't had time for a decent meal, and I won't shave another chin. That's what I mean.

"Oh!" said Brime, calming down a little.

"I don't hold with working oneself to death, sir. Do you?"

"No; certainly not," said the gardener, with divers memories of idle pipes in the tool-house when "Master" had gone in the quarry.

"And so say I, sir," said Wimble. "Nobody thinks a bit the better of you if you do."

"That's true," said the gardener, letting his head sink back with a sigh, as Wimble stood before him working up the lather in his pot to a splendid consistency.

"Anxious time for you people at the Fort, sir," said Wimble, beginning to lather gently, and taking care to leave his customer's lips quite free.

"Yes," said the gardener shortly.

"Poor man! Ah, I wonder how many times I have shaved him, sir."

The gardener stared straight before him in silence, frowning heavily.

“In the midst of life we are in death, Mr Brime, sir, parson says o’ Sundays,” continued Wimble, pausing to tuck the cloth a little more in round his customer’s neck.

No acquiescent reply.

“Just like things in your profession, Mr Brime, or, as I might say, in mine. Flowers and grass comes up, and the frost takes one, and the scythe the other ; or beards comes up and the hair grows, and it’s the razor for one, and the shears for the other, eh ?”

“Humph !”

“Yes, sir ; you are quite right,” said Wimble, replacing the brush in the pot, and proceeding to rub the soap into his customer’s cheeks, throat and chin with a long, lissome finger.

Silence.

“Wonderful stiff, wiry beard yours, Mr Brime, sir. Pleasure to shave it, though. I hate your fluffy beards that lie down before the razor. Yours is a downright upright one, which meets the razor like crisp grass. What a difference in beards. Not in a hurry, sir, I hope ?”

“No.”

“Then I’ll do it well, sir, so as to make it last. Ah, many’s the time I’ve shaved poor Mr Gartram, sir! Hard man to please over pimples, while a nick used to make him swear terrible, and there are times when you can’t help just a touch, sir,”

“No,” said Brime, thinking of slips with the scythe.

“Good customer gone,” said the barber, resuming the brush once more, but still keeping clear of the lips. “Always a shilling for going up and shaving him, Mr Brime. Yes, a capital customer gone.”

Here the shaving-pot was set down, and a razor taken out of a loop to re-strop.

“Bad job for me, Mr Brime. Won’t affect you, I suppose, sir?” continued Wimble, finishing off the keen-edged razor on his palm with a loud *pat, pat, pat*.

“Not affect me?” said the gardener, sitting up sharply; for the barber had touched the right key at last, and the instrument began to sound. “But it will affect me. How do I know what’ll take place now, sir? Saved up

my little bit o' money, and made the cottage comfortable and fit for a wife."

"Indeed, Mr. Brime, and you'd been thinking of that sort o' thing, sir?"

"P'r'aps I had and p'r'aps I hadn't," snarled the gardener, savagely. "Not the first man, I suppose, as thought of it."

"No, sir, indeed. I've been thinking of it for years, and making my bits o' preparation; but"—he said with a sigh—"it hasn't come off yet."

A brother in disappointment. The gardener felt satisfied and disposed to be confidential, although the lather was beginning to feel cold and clammy, and the tiny vesicles were bursting and dying away.

"Yes, I were thinking about it, Mr Wimble," he said bitterly; "and I were going to speak, and I dessay afore long you'd ha' heard us asked in church, and now this comes and upsets it all."

"Don't say that, sir," said the barber, still stropping his razor gently. "Like everything else, it passes away and is forgotten. "You've only got to wait."

"Got to wait!" cried the gardener; "why, the trouble has 'most killed her, sir, and how do I know what's going to happen next?"

"Ah, bad indeed, sir."

"Our young Miss 'll never stop in that great place now; and, of course, it's a month's warning, and not a chance of another place nigh here."

"Oh, don't say that, Mr Brime, sir. That's the worst way of looking at it."

"Ay, but it's the true way."

"You're a bit upset with trouble now, sir. You wait. Why, there's a fine chance here for a clever man like yourself to set up for himself in the fruit and greengrocery. See what a job it is to get a bit of decent green stuff. I never know what it is. Leastways, I shouldn't if it weren't for a friend bringing me in a morsel o' fruit now and then."

"Ah, it's all over with that now, Mr Wimble. Poor master; and we may as well give up all thoughts o' wedding. Strange set-out it's been."

"Ah!" said Wimble; and *pat, pat, pat*, went the razor over his hand as the lather dried.

"I can't see much chance for Mr Gladdy now."

"Ah! he was going to marry Miss Gartram, wasn't he?"

"He'd ha' liked to, and the poor guv'nor was on for it; but I know a little more about that than he did."

"Ah, yes, Mr Brime, lookers-on sees more of the game. I always used to think—but of course it was no business of mine—that it was to be Mr Christopher Lisle, till he seemed to be chucked over like—and for looking elsewhere," he added between his teeth.

"Looking elsewhere? Gammon!"

"Oh, but he does, sir."

"Yah! Not he, Wimble. He's dead on to the young missus."

"No, no, Mr Brime, sir," said Wimble, waving his razor; "you'll excuse me. You're wrong there."

"Wrong?" cried the gardener, excitedly. "Bet you a shilling on it. No, I don't want to rob you, because I know."

"Well, you may know a deal about gardening, Mr Brime," said Wimble deprecatingly,

as he shook his head shrewdly ; “but fax is fax.”

“Not always, Wimble. You won’t let it go no further, because he’s a good sort.”

“If you feel as you can’t trust me, Mr Brime, sir,” said the barber, laying down the razor and taking up the brush and shaving-pot once more to dip the former very slowly in the hot water.

“Oh, you won’t tell,” said Brime, who had calmed his excitement with a great many glasses of the household ale at the Fort. You’re all wrong. Mr Lisle’s after our young Miss still ; and—you mark my words—as soon as they decently can, they’ll marry.”

“No, sir, no,” said Wimble, shaking his head, with his eyes fixed upon his best razor, and his mind upon Mrs Sarson ; “you’re wrong.”

“Why, he was up at our place to see her only last night.”

“No !”

“He was, and I ketched him on the hop.”

“You don’t say so.”

“But I do. He owned what he was up

there for, poor chap, for the guv'nor was very rough on him at last. I took him for a boy after our fruit."

"Are you talking about last night, when your Master died?" said Wimble, breathlessly.

"Yes, of course."

"Where was he then?"

"Down our garden, on the sly."

Wimble's face was a study.

"It was like this. He didn't know there was company, and he was trying to get a word with Miss Claude; but, of course, she couldn't get to him, because there was Mr Glider and the doctor there."

"Well, you do surprise me, Mr Brime."

"Yes: where would your shilling be now, eh?"

"Well, young folks will be young folks; but I was deceived."

"Yes, you were. Poor chap. He little thought when he left me in low spirits, because he couldn't get to see his lass, how soon his chances were going to mend. Bah! Miss Claude didn't care that for the other one—a mean, sneaking sort of fellow. How the poor

guv'nor could have taken to him as he did, I don't know."

"Well, you do surprise me," said Wimble, re-tucking in the cloth which had been disarranged by Brime's "don't care that" and snap of the fingers.

"Yes, I thought I could ; but keep it quiet."

"By all means, Mr Brime. Your girl's in sad trouble, I suppose ?"

"Crying her eyes out, poor lass. Master was as hard as his own stone ; but they had been very fond of each other."

"Yes ; and I s'pose he was a good-hearted, generous man underneath. Give away a great deal to the poor."

"Not he, Wimble. There was a deal given away, but it was Miss Claude did all that, bless her. Master— there ; I'm not going to say a word again' the dead."

"No, no, of course not, sir ; but what trouble you must be in !"

"Trouble, sir ! When I heard of it this morning, you might have knocked me down with a feather."

"Hah ! very awful really, sir," said Wimble,

beginning to lather again, and this time in so thoughtful a manner that the gardener's mouth disappeared in the soapy foam, and the desire for more information seemed to have gone.

"Was Chris Lisle up at the Fort last night? Was our suspicions unjust, then?"

"Then, it must be all on her side," thought Wimble, beginning to strop his razor again fiercely, and he operated directly after with so much savage energy, that the gardener's hands clutched the sides of the chair, and he held on, with the perspiration oozing out upon his forehead, and causing a tickling sensation around the roots of his hair.

"Find it hot, Mr Brime, sir?" said the barber, as he gave a few finishing touches to his patient's chin.

"Very," said the gardener, with a sigh of relief, as the razor was wiped and thrown down, and a cool, wet sponge removed the last traces of the soap; "you went over me so quick, I was afraid of an accident."

"No fear, sir. When a man's shaved a hundred thousand people, he isn't likely to

make a mistake. Thank you, sir ; and I hope you will get everything settled all right up yonder. When's the funeral ? ”

“ Don't know yet, sir. When the doctors and coroners have done, I suppose.”

“ Hum ! ” said Wimble to himself, as he ran over the gardener's words. “ Then, perhaps I have been wrong about him, but I can't be about her. She wouldn't have held me off all this time if she hadn't had thoughts elsewhere.”

He was standing at the door as he spoke, probably meaning to receive more customers after all, for he did not slip the bolt.

“ Up there in the garden, last night, to see the young lady, and the next morning Mr Gartram found dead. Well, it's a terrible affair.”

Michael Wimble had obtained more information than he had anticipated, and of a very different class.

COLSTON AND COMPANY, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.













